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CHRISTIANITY
AGAINST
INFIDELITY;
OR, THE
TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL HISTORY.

**EMBRACING A PRELIMINARY ARGUMENT FOR THE EXISTENCE
OF GOD, AND THE REASONABLENESS AND NECESSITY
OF A REVELATION ; AND A REVIEW OF
SCEPTICAL PHILOSOPHY.**

BY THOMAS B. THAYER.

NEW EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED.

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**CINCINNATI:**  
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## PREFACE.

THE writer of the following pages is aware, that the subject of which they treat has been often and ably discussed by others ; but he is also aware, that their works for the most part, are of too voluminous or too critical a character, to engage the attention of that numerous class of readers who might be induced to go through a less labored and less imposing volume. The works of Lardner, the most valuable ever written in defence of the Christian religion, are not probably seen, much less read, by one in five thousand of the great mass of the people. And nearly the same remark may be made in relation to the works of Macknight, Leland, Stackhouse, Gregory, Newton, Horne, and even those of Watson and Paley. It is well known that Paley's volume is more extensively circulated and read than any other work on the same subject, and yet it cannot be doubted that a large majority of Christian believers have never so much as seen the book.

The object aimed at in the present volume is, the throwing together in as small a space as possible an outline of the Christian argument ; not with the expectation of making it a substitute for the works mentioned, but with the hope that it may serve as a kind of introduction to them. Some may perhaps be persuaded to read this volume because it is small ; and having read this, we trust they will be sufficiently interested in the subject to pursue it farther, and enter into a thorough investigation of the



argument in all its bearings. It is not expected that those who have made themselves familiar with the valuable productions which have been named, will give these pages a perusal—for such they were not intended.

It may be well to say here, that no claims are advanced on the score of originality. The very nature of the subject is such as to show that any very formidable pretensions in this respect would be unfounded. The writer has availed himself of all the materials within his reach, and only regrets that he had not access to more. It is believed that due acknowledgements are made for debts contracted in this respect. As to the style but little need be said. It has been the aim throughout to state every proposition in plain and intelligible terms, without any seeking for superlatives.

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

IN the present edition important additions have been made, enlarging the volume to almost double its former size. Nearly the entire body of the matter embraced in chapters ix—xii, is new ; and as the reader will perceive, it has been prepared mostly in reference to the present phases of scepticism, which claims now, once more, to be specially philosophical and rational. The theory of Strauss has been examined more at length, because, though known by name only as the mythic theory, the work embodies in fact, the essence of all possible forms of unbelief. Of course the limits within which we are confined would not allow of detail ; and our review, therefore, is based on a few leading features of the system.

Beside the above additions, the first chapters of the argument have been considerably improved. The Introduction has been much enlarged ; and several sections of the work have been re-written and new ones added, and large portions of new matter inserted in the body of other sections. Chapters i. sect. 3 ; ii. 3 ; iii. 1, 2 ; vi. 3, 5 ; vii. 1 ; viii. 1 ; &c. are examples.

In justice to the writer, it should be stated here that the work having been put to press in Cincinnati, he could not of course read the proof. In consequence, some errors have crept into the pages, mostly in the notes, and in the spelling of proper names ; as *Horace* for *Horne*, p. 75 ; *Newton* for *Norton*, p. 167 ; &c. There are a few others.

as *physical* for *pshycical*, p. 12 ; the omission of " not " after " could," p. 16, four lines from the bottom ; which, of course, reverses the meaning of the sentence. So the capital OF, p. 246, should be italic. Those who know the difficulties of being exact, even when one reads his own proof, will pardon these errors, without farther apology.

And now, humbly asking the blessing of God on our labors, we give the work to the perusal of those for whom it was originally designed, viz : such as have neither time nor means to devote to a more thorough investigation of the historical argument for the truth of Christianity.

*Brooklyn, N. Y., April, 1849.*

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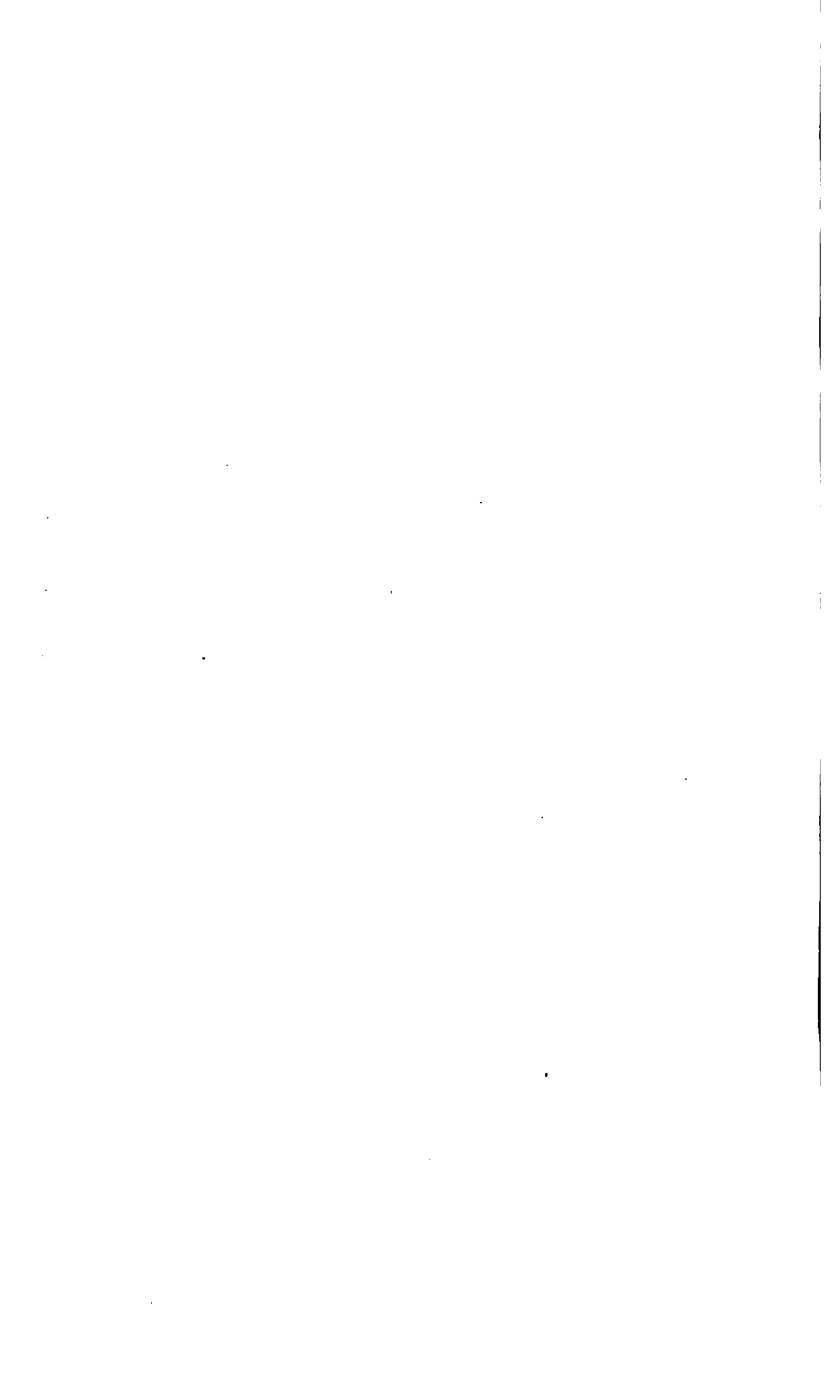
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## INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

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1. EVERY one who is in the habit of looking around him in the world, must be satisfied that, within a few years, the progress of infidelity under a variety of forms has been great. It is certain that the number of those who have fallen within its influence, is, at the present time, by no means small; and it is equally certain that this fact may be traced to causes wholly independent of the argument for or against Christianity. It must be evident to all who have had the benefit of observation in this respect, that not a few of those who are Infidels know but very little of the history, or indeed of the principles, of that religion which they have rejected as mere fable.

2. This remark, it is readily admitted, will not apply to all who have cast aside the faith of Christ. The writer is acquainted with some, for whom he has ever entertained sentiments of respect; men who have doubtless read much on this subject, and whose present unbelief is the result of this reading. But even here he is inclined to the opinion, that the works which have been perused, are principally those which have been written against the Christian religion, while those written in reply to them, and in support of the Christian religion, have been mostly, if not altogether neglected. And it is verily believed that if such persons would read the same amount for Christianity, that they read against it, the complexion of their views and

feelings with regard to its truth and value would be essentially changed.

3. Aside from these, however, the remark already made is true, that a large number of the unbelievers of the present age are in a great measure ignorant of the very nature of the Christian religion, and altogether ignorant of the external evidences by which its advocates attempt to prove it, what it professes to be, a religion from God. They are infidels, not because they know, but because they do not know. They have never taken the trouble to acquaint themselves with the historical proof for the truth of the Gospel records; they have never studied those labored and conclusive works that have been written in their defence. They know nothing about these things, and it is to be doubted if the majority of them ever heard of a half dozen works of this character. This is not meant in severity, but as a simple statement of what is believed to be the facts of the case, of what might unquestionably be established, if examination were made, by numerous examples.

4. If, then, these persons will not inform themselves with regard to these particulars, it is surely nothing very surprising that they should be turned aside by specious and seemingly plausible objections, aided, as they usually are, by an accompaniment of sneers and sarcasms. It is not at all to be wondered at, that such individuals should be sceptical, when the little knowledge they have on the subject, if knowledge it may be called, is all on one side, and that with the laugh in its favor. They hear these objections and sneers every day; they are repeated again and again by those who have learned them, and, having nothing to offer on the other side, and supposing because they have not, nothing can be offered, it is perfectly natural that they should at last become Infidels, and yet the Christian argument be not in the least affected by such results. Every one can and must see that they are Infidels, because

they are entirely unacquainted with the evidences for the truth of Christianity.

5. Another cause to which is owing much of the Infidelity of the present age, is the vain and silly notions, so prevalent among a certain class, in relation to what is termed Philosophy. Some men imagine now, that they have only to reject Christianity, and pronounce it all imposition and priestcraft, and they are philosophers at once. It seems to be the received opinion among them, that universal scepticism is evidence of a great mind; and nothing, in the estimation of such, can be surer proof of intellectual superiority, than to treat all religion as mere fable, fit only to amuse women and children. Hence come the wild and groundless assertions touching Christianity, which are so often and so confidently repeated; and hence the many rude observations and ruder jests respecting its meek and benevolent author. These things are regarded as demonstrations of having risen above the common herd of mankind, and outgrown their prejudices and superstitions. And there is a certain pride they feel in plunging thus fearlessly into the whirlpool of infidelity, while lesser minds tremble even to approach the brink. They flatter themselves that they are looked up to by the multitude as men of courage and sense.

6. But we would assure these men, in friendly language, that they mistake. Scepticism is not philosophy, nor is unbelief any evidence of knowledge or of superior strength of mind. There is a wide difference between the two, and it is a difference well deserving their attention. The gaping crowd may wonder to hear them treat with levity, things that other men have been wont to regard as sacred—those of like spirit with themselves may call it Philosophy—but they may be satisfied that men of calm and sober judgment will look upon their conduct with feelings very wide from these. The pretensions of Christianity,

whether true or false, are of too serious a nature to be trifled with. The existence of a supreme and all-ruling Intelligence—his character and government—whether we are his offspring or friendless orphans in the broad waste of the world—whether we live for to-day only, and then go down forever in darkness and nothingness, or whether there is beyond this an existence of endless advancement, and glory, and happiness—these are questions concerning which poor human nature can never cheat itself into indifference, and they are questions which no man of reflection, which no philosopher, will approach but with sober thought. And they sadly mistake the nature of true philosophy, and the character of a great mind, who think to give evidence of possessing either, by treating these momentous subjects with contempt, or ridicule, or any thing that borders upon lightness.

7. At the present time this sceptical philosophy seems to be changing its dialect somewhat; and while it claims to be exceedingly spiritual, and talks loudly of intellectual freedom and progress, all the while using the language and profession of Christian belief, it strikes at the very foundations on which Christianity rests. It denies its miraculous origin, and virtually sets aside the historical verity of its records. It is proper that we should give some attention to this philosophy, its relations to the nature and object of all true religion, and its preposterous pretensions to knowledge and special spirituality, and power to advance man to perfection. There seems to be quite a mania among a certain class for these spiritual fine spun speculations.

8. Every little fledgling, which has scarcely left its nest, or the care of its mother, hastens through the spelling book and primary reader, and then sets up for an oracle; discourses learnedly of spirit and matter; of the physical and moral worlds; the eternal and unbending

laws of nature; of the mysteries of time and space; the wonders and revelations of animal and spiritual magnetism; of the infinite and invisible; and deals with the profoundest questions of divine truth with more ease and familiarity, and not half the reverence of a Jesus or a Paul. He speaks as though he had sounded all the depths of knowledge, with an air of unquestionable authority. He talks of things known and unknown, mostly of the last. He uses coined formulas of speech, "words of prodigious length and thundering sound." He rises up into what he calls the spiritual view of all subjects. He expands, and becomes more and more transparent, till the inflation is so great as to end in the usual results of the law of expansion; or he passes off out of sight into infinite fogdom; and, like the comet that became entangled among the moons of Jupiter, never regains his orbit again, which, perhaps, is little cause for regret. The comet is scarcely needed to light up our evening skies; and its presence will not be missed, while the fixed stars continue to shine on in their everlasting beauty.

9. Now we are ready to say that we have no reverence whatever for this kind of philosophers, nor for their philosophy. It is a broad burlesque upon the name. It is all surface—there is no depth to it. It is vain and deceitful, engendering pride and strife, and without profit or use. It has no practical side to it. It does not come down into the earnest and solemn realities of life, and speak to our individual and social duties, relations, and responsibilities. It spends itself in asking questions, which, if answered, would lead to no valuable results. It ape the profound and mysterious. It occupies all its time in mere speculation, in weaving gossamer webs, and building rainbows on the ever passing clouds. It talks like a parrot but never works, never makes itself useful. It is like a certain poet of whom Johnson says, "he wrote as though

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he had been to a feast of the muses, and coming away had stolen all the scraps." It is satisfied with this shadow of wisdom, with technicalities and formulas, without ever making any serious attempt to approach the substance, to attain a knowledge of the truths which these formulas are intended to represent. In a word, this folly, absurdly called philosophy, is a mere baby, not to say idiotic, babbling, sheer nonsense mostly; intelligible neither to itself, nor to those who hear.

10. "But do you fear progress?" O no; but we would have the progress forward, and not backward. "Do you fear free thought and discussion?" O no; but desire it, and value the privilege, and for that reason avail ourselves of it in saying what we have to say now. "But if these speculations are idle, if the philosophy you oppose is false and foolish, it will die when it has had its day." We know it; and precisely for that reason we speak, that we may help to make its day as short as possible. If we believed error and folly to be immortal in their nature, we should cease to oppose them; but it is because they are not, that we give our voice and hand against them, hoping to hasten their death. The reason assigned for silence, is precisely the reason for speaking.

11. Besides, although we have no fear for truth and sound philosophy in their contact with these impalpable gasses; yet there are many honest minds which are led away by them from the solid earth, where they have hitherto walked forward securely, into the vast quagmires of an unexplored region, where the way is difficult, and leads to no land of promise. And there are many shallow ones who, under these influences, following bewildered guides, hasten to make themselves ridiculous. Both these evils we would do what we may to prevent.

12. For *Philosophy* in its noblest sense, in the large meaning of the word, we have the profoundest reverence,

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and desire its increase and its influence in the world. We honor from the soul that love of wisdom which alone rightfully bears the name ; and which, bearing it, seeks to make it honorable by earnest effort to discover the hidden relations of things ; the threads of connection between cause and effect ; which reverently makes its inquiries into the laws that regulate mind and matter, by which God moves forward the order of events in the physical and spiritual worlds ; which seeks to understand the meaning of life—to unfold the nature of its responsibilities and duties ; and to rule to wise and useful ends all knowledge and power, and bring the feelings, the purposes and actions into conformity with the laws of eternal rectitude.

13. This Philosophy is venerable and lovely in the sight of heaven, as well as of earth. All wise men, and all good men rejoice in its presence, and welcome its labors and their results. Great is the good which it has wrought out in the diffusion of knowledge, in the instruction of the ignorant, and in silencing the babbling of vain and shallow pretenders. It has done great service in bringing man into a more intimate acquaintance with God, with his works and his laws ; and it has inspired many souls with a higher faith and a more grateful love towards Him who doeth his will in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and who is the Father of us all. It has also made man more closely to look into his own nature, to develope its powers, discover its laws, its relations to the outer world, the elements of his moral and spiritual life, the sources of its strength, the causes of its decay, and the remedy.

14. All this has true philosophy done, and so deserves our respect and affection. It is the friend and handmaid of Religion, which is, after all, the highest and most perfect Philosophy. Or, in other words, Philosophy itself, when rightly understood in all its relations, uses, and ends,

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when brought to the last analysis, is in fact Religion. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Religion of the New Testament, is the truest, the noblest intellectual, spiritual, and practical Philosophy the world has ever seen. Freed from all the peculiarities and absurdities, from all the idle and profitless speculations and misty dreams which have been in all ages associated with that name, it has at once struck home into the great and earnest realities of life. With its sublime doctrines of God, with its teachings of the present order of nature and events, with its divine speech of the future, and its practical application of all truth to the duties and aims of life—with these it has accomplished and will accomplish more for our race, than all forms of Philosophy, so called, have ever been able to foreshadow even, in all ages of the past. And so, therefore, as the best and divinest Philosophy, showing its power by its works, it claims alike our faith and our affection.

15. I know that the study of Philosophy and Physical Science may be pursued independently of the Gospel, independently of faith or practice, as an intellectual exercise merely. But I know also that, in such case, it is defeated of its legitimate ends, and robbed of the crown of its glory. All science, physical and moral, all knowledge of whatever nature, is intended for use; and it is the office of true Philosophy to put it to this use. It seeks not only to establish facts and principles, but to apply them—to show the practical side of them. It looks into the heart of nature, and seeks for causes and the hidden relations of things; not to rest in these—not to gratify an idle curiosity and the vain pride of learning—but to get nearer to the first great Cause, the Life-spring, the God that is at the centre of all things, and from whom, as the heart of the universe, all things derive their existence, and its perpetuation. It seeks through these to understand more of his perfections, the glory of his works, and the

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goodness of his character, and his relation and disposition towards his creatures. It seeks also through this knowledge to obtain a clearer insight into the purpose of our present life, to develop the powers and faculties of the mind, to cultivate the affections, to discover our obligations and duties, and to illustrate the hope and faith of a future life.

16. This is the office of Philosophy in the first and last, and only proper meaning of that much abused term. In this way it shows its literal and highest signification—love of wisdom—consecrating that wisdom, consecrating all knowledge to the glory of God and the good of man. And so, in this way, as we have said, true Philosophy in its final causes, in its last analysis, is identical, so far as respects its practical relations, with Religion. And hence, I repeat, the Gospel of the New Testament, the Religion of Christ, is the truest and most perfect philosophy which has ever been taught in our world. It is the only system which dedicates all knowledge of God, and nature, and man, to holy and useful ends; which proclaims as its ultimate purpose, and pursues it with unswerving fidelity and firmness, the illustration of the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of the Divine Character; and the direction of the thoughts, feelings, and actions, the whole life of man, to the high and noble ends for which it was given.

17. In this respect I do not claim for Christianity more than is universally conceded. I only wish the concession was a more intelligent one, and that the principle it involves was more justly appreciated. I wish those who are so ambitious of philosophizing, would honestly ask the meaning and aim of Philosophy, and then look into the Gospel, and see if they do not find both these developed there as in no other book, as in no other system.

18. Considered simply as an intellectual exercise, I believe the doctrines of Christ respecting God, the creation,

the omnipresence and ever active energy of the Divine Mind in nature and in man; his physical doctrines, or such as relate to the soul, its origin and destiny. These, I believe, are unsurpassed by anything produced by man. And when you add to these his ethical teachings, the gospel system of moral philosophy, you have nothing equal to it in all history—nothing so divinely fitted to develope all the faculties and answer all the wants of man.

19. Christianity, or in other words true Philosophy, is pre-eminently practical. It does not indulge in abstractions, unless there is a principle involved which it seeks to embody in some useful form or shape. It is always in earnest. It comes out from schools, and formulas, and technicalities, and enters into actualities, descends into the broad arena of the world's daily life. It has a positive side as well as a negative. It does not deny only, and demand proof; but itself brings the proof. It does not ask idle questions; but seeks to answer such as are really important. It does not delight to throw difficulties in the way of others, to display its skill and cunning; but kindly labors to remove such as are already in the way. It is never egotistical or boastful; it is never impious or dogmatic; it speaks of the prejudices, and even superstitions of the ignorant gently and courteously; and, seeking to enlighten and instruct, it is ever humble and devout; knowing that the wisest and most truly learned are always the most modest and reverent—that they, who have looked farthest into the awful and beautiful mysteries of the universe, believe most and love most!

In behalf of this philosophy, let me, in conclusion, speak my word of commendation, and invite my readers, one and all, to the study and pursuit of it. It will lead you continually into a nearer acquaintance with God and nature, and with your own souls. Follow it diligently, with the New Testament in your hands; and instead of

leading you away from it, it will increase your faith in its teachings, and bring you at last to the sublime conclusion in which all philosophy and religion, the law, the prophets and the gospel centre and are fulfilled—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and thy brother as thyself!"

But if there are any who would reject this friendly and reasonable advice—any who choose to scoff rather than make this investigation, we would say to them, in the words of another, "It becomes you to consider, with great seriousness and attention, whether it can be for your interest to esteem a few witty sarcasms, or metaphysical subtleties, or ignorant misrepresentations, or unwarranted assertions, as unanswerable arguments against revelation; and a very slight reflection will convince you, that it will certainly be for your reputation to employ the flippancy of your rhetoric, and the poignancy of your ridicule, upon any subject, rather than upon the subject of religion."



## CHAPTER I.

### THE EXISTENCE OF GOD—OBJECTIONS.

#### SECTION I.

##### AN EXAMINATION OF THE ARGUMENT AGAINST THE EXISTENCE OF A SUPREME INTELLIGENCE, FOUNDED UPON THE LAWS OF NA- TURE.

1. As the existence of a Supreme Intelligence lies at the very base of Christianity, and as all attempts to establish the truth of the latter, without having first established the truth of the former, would be regarded by the unbeliever as premature and vain; we shall therefore make this the starting point in our observations. It may seem, perhaps, to some a work of supererogation, to enter upon the discussion of a question which is regarded, by not a few, as having only one side; but our answer is found partly in what has just been stated, that the truth of this is the foundation on which the Christian system must rest, and partly in the fact that, however strange it may appear for reasonable beings to deny the existence of God, surrounded as they are with the innumerable witnesses of this truth, it must nevertheless be admitted that many do deny it, and offer what they deem sufficient reasons for this denial. Under these circumstances, then, it becomes our duty to meet these reasons or arguments, not by pro-

nouncing them absurdities at the outset, because this will not satisfy those who advance them; but by patiently and candidly examining them, and pointing out their irrelevancy, or want of consistency or force, or whatever may be their peculiar weakness. It is our design to meet in this spirit some of the objections to the being of an Intelligent First Cause of all things; or, perhaps with more propriety it might be said, some of the arguments offered by way of showing that there is no evidence which necessarily proves the existence of such a Supreme Intelligence. Having done this, we shall bring forward some of the evidences which go to establish this fact, as we think, beyond question.

2. Much has been said about the *laws of Nature*—they have been a favorite theme upon which some have delighted to expatiate in all the luxury of metaphysical philosophy; and their harmony, regularity, power, and efficiency have been extolled in terms of rapturous praise. These laws, it is affirmed, are sufficient, and more than sufficient, for the production of all the wonderful and mighty effects which we behold around us, and which we call the works of God. But while we much admire the poetry and beauty of these descriptions of Nature, we have some doubt of the propriety of deifying her laws, and we cannot but call in question that philosophy which ascribes to them Omnipotence, Omniscience, and an universal and ever acting benevolence; for such are the principles which we see in operation in the mighty machinery of the universe. This must be admitted by the worshipper of reason, and the child of science; he cannot, he will not deny that less than almighty power and unlimited wisdom could control and direct the ten thousand times ten thousand worlds which the discoveries of astronomy have unveiled to our view; he must admit this, whether he ascribe the power and wisdom to a God or to the laws of

Nature. But here let us pause a moment, and ask the objector what he means by the laws of Nature, because unless we have a clear and definite conception of this particular, all our labor will be misspent.

3. What then does he mean by Nature? The earth, the solar system, the universe of systems, suns, and planets? From the manner in which the expression is used, we should judge this to be its signification, and it is presumed that the correctness of this will not be disputed. But we must be permitted to say to the objector here, that he assumes the very question in debate. It is for him to show how these systems, suns, &c., came to exist in the first place. Does he still affirm that they were produced by the operation of the laws of Nature? But these are Nature itself; and it is for the existence of this Nature that we wish him to account. Let us look at this a little more closely. We ask how the earth, for example, with its regularity of form and motion, and all its beauty of scenery and variety of animal life, came into being? We are told that it was the effect of the laws of earth; but this does not answer the question. Earth could have had no laws until it was earth. To talk therefore about the laws of earth, before the existence of earth, is unphilosophical, and involves a contradiction in language. It is only necessary to make the application of this argument to nature, and the difficulty of the objector will at once be made manifest. The inquiry is, how nature, by which he means the universe of worlds, with all their connections and influences, came to exist? The reply is, It is the result of the laws of Nature. But Nature could have had no laws until it had an existence, and it is this existence which the unbeliever is called upon to explain, and for which he is required to assign a cause. Until this is done, it is all in vain to talk about the laws of Nature, because that is a point in the discussion which we have not yet reached; we



must account for the thing itself, before we make its laws the ground for argument.

4. As there has been much indefinite and even loose reasoning concerning this particular, it will not be thought out of place perhaps to extend our remarks a little. No man who wishes to arrive at truth, will indulge in the use of any terms, without a clear and distinct meaning being attached to them, at least in his own mind. No single circumstance has done more to retard the progress of science and knowledge, and to perpetuate the dominion of error, than the repetition of words and phrases, with which those who employ them have connected no definite ideas. It cannot be expected that we should enable others to understand us, if we do not understand ourselves, and have no just and well defined conceptions of what we mean to convey by the terms we use. If the premises of our positions are not clear and intelligible to our own minds, it cannot be supposed that the conclusions drawn from them will be intelligible to the minds of others. Notwithstanding, however, this is so important a point, there is reason to believe that the expression "laws of Nature," is in the mouths of a vast proportion of those who use it, a phrase without meaning—a phrase by which they do not themselves know what they intend to signify. This appears from the assertion so often made, and which has been noticed, that the laws of Nature are adequate to the production of Nature itself. It must be evident to every one who will reflect a moment, that nothing can be more inconsistent than to suppose the natural causes which we see in operation around us, formed our world in all its beauty and harmony. So far from this, they are the result of that formation, and could not have existed had not that formation existed before them. Hence, assigning the laws of nature as the producing cause of the universe, is reversing the order of things, and making that the cause which

only an effect, or rather it is making an effect its own cause, which is certainly illogical, and at war, length and breadth, with all true philosophy. Let it be fixed in the mind then, that the laws of nature could not have had a being until after the construction of Nature; that they arise from the combination of things, from their several positions and mutual relations to each other; in one word, that they are the streams and not the fountains, the offspring and not the parent of creation. Let these facts be kept in the van of argument, and the objector required to meet them fairly, and it will be found that he is thrown back again to his starting place.

5. For the purpose of showing more clearly the bearing of the above reasoning, we will produce an example by way of illustration. Take the case of water, the constituents of which are hydrogen and oxygen, in the proportion of one part by weight of hydrogen to  $7\frac{1}{2}$  parts of oxygen, and two parts by bulk of hydrogen to one of oxygen. The inquiry is, How came these gasses to combine in these definite proportions so as to form water? It must be remembered that there can be no laws of water until it is made; "but oxygen and hydrogen," says a judicious writer, "no more tend to form water, nor of themselves could form it, than any other of the numerous things which also consist of them. Neither oxygen nor hydrogen could, or ever would move itself in that exact proportion, and so unite with the other as to form water. To suppose them able to separate themselves from their several elementary accumulations in the precise quantities necessary to form the aqueous fluid, and to agree together to combine in these quantities only, and in a firm and lasting union, is to give to each of them a mind, a thought, a foresight, a plan, a will, a resolution, and a spontaneous self-motive for this special purpose, which would make every particle of each an intelligent, thinking, and choos-

ing being. This idea would be preposterous." "As soon as water was formed, the properties and the laws of water would begin. They could not have any anterior existence. They are not in the oxygen; they are not in the hydrogen. They could not be before water was. This is a clear and decided example, how the laws of Nature and the properties of things arise from creation, and subsequent to it, and never form or produce it; for the same reasoning is applicable to every substance of nature, and to all its laws and agencies."\*

6. The preceding argument is, we think, irresistible. The unbeliever may indeed say, that the combination of the oxygen and hydrogen so as to form water was owing entirely to their affinity for each other; but in saying this, he abandons his original position, and destroys his own argument. If it was the affinity for each other of its materials, and their consequent combination, which formed water, then it was not produced by the laws of water; and hence in the application the unbeliever admits that the world or universe in its present state was not produced by the laws of Nature, but was owing to the tendency or affinity of the substances of which it is composed. We have done, then, with that doctrine which teaches that Nature is the effect of the laws of Nature.† The argument is now placed upon a new ground, but not a less difficult one for the objector. He affirms that water is the result of the affinity which oxygen and hydrogen have for each other, and which causes them to unite in its formation. But does he not perceive that this only removes the difficulty one step backward without solving it? The inquiry now is, How came oxygen and hydrogen to exist? or, if we make a direct use of this illustration again, we ask,

\* Turner's Sacred History of the World, vol. II. p. 277-8.

† See the questions respecting the "laws of Nature" farther discussed under the head of Miracles, chapt. ix. sect. 1.

If the universe as it is now, was the effect of the mutual affinity of its materials, how came these materials into being? It will be seen that such an answer is no explanation of the phenomena;—the existence of these materials is still to be accounted for, and the task of explanation on this point will be found no more easy than on the other. If the unbeliever can tell us how these came to exist at the first, he will have accomplished something—otherwise he is yet in the dark.

## SECTION II.

### AN EXAMINATION OF THE ARGUMENTS FOUNDED ON THE ASSERTED ETERNITY OF MATTER.

1. To relieve himself of the difficulty of the preceding argument, the unbeliever will probably resort to the old assertion, that *matter is eternal*. We know of but one argument that has ever been advanced to prove the eternity of matter, and that is grounded upon another assertion, that it is indestructible. But here likewise we call for proof. If in reply to this call it be said that we cannot destroy a single particle of any body, nor annihilate so much as one atom, it is readily granted. But what then? Does it follow from this that matter is indestructible? We cannot do a great many things which can nevertheless be done. Because *we* cannot destroy a single grain or atom, it is by no means certain, therefore, that it cannot be destroyed. We cannot create a single atom; and the abstract argument drawn from this fact, has the same force against the existence of matter, as the one just named has against its destruction.

2. However, be this as it may, we regard the point as having but very little bearing upon the question at issue. Suppose we grant that matter is eternal, or that the materials of which the universe are composed have existed from eternity; what advantage does the unbeliever derive from this admission? Certainly none whatever; his course

is involved in the same darkness as before. A moment's consideration will show this. Does the eternity of matter explain all the wonderful phenomena of the world around us? Does it account for the order and harmony of the solar system—for the regular and exact revolutions of the planets—for the complicate, yet nicely balanced influences by which for ages they have been kept in play without once deviating from their path? Does it account for the ten thousand forms of animal and vegetable organization which are found on the surface of our globe? Does it account for the existence of that wonderful creature man, and solve the mystery of mind? \* Not one of these questions can be answered in the affirmative, not one of these problems is solved by the eternity of matter.

3. It is repeated, therefore, that if we grant the unbeliever all for which he contends in this respect, it does not lighten the burthen of his difficulties, nor aid him one step in his progress. He has still to account for the wisdom and intelligence every where visible in the natural world; he has still to explain the design and contrivance which appear in every department of the universe that has come

\* Suppose any parcel or lump of matter eternal and at rest—how came it to move? It is impossible that it should have added motion to itself. This must have been given it by some other power. But suppose motion eternal too; yet matter, unthinking matter and motion, could never produce thought. If so, why is it not the case now? why do we not see the mud of the street, when set in motion by the wagon wheel, bringing forth mind, forming itself into an intelligent being? If simple matter and motion have ever produced thought, there is no reason why they should not in this age. Or if, as certain philosophers affirm, thought is the effect of organization, which is in turn the production of the elements, why do not the elements fall into such productions now? If they ever did in any age or country bring forth the organization in question, it is a weighty inquiry, which the philosophical sceptic is desired to answer—why have they not continued from that time to the present to bring forth such organization?

within our observation, and to inform us how dead unconscious matter could think, reason, determine, and adopt the stupendous plan, for plan it is, call it by what name he may, according to which the affairs of that universe were at first carried into operation, and have ever since been directed. All this labor, even if we allow that matter is eternal, is yet before the unbeliever, and we call upon him to come forth to the task, and show how these things can be, and remove the difficulties still in his way.

4. But the great mistake in this argument remains to be noticed, and it is one which seems to us unfortunate for him who adopts this method of reasoning, to prove "there is no God." Why does the sceptic refuse to believe the world was created? Because this would pre-suppose a God. And why does he deny the existence of a God? The reply is that he cannot conceive of an uncreated self-existent being. And does he deny the existence of every thing he cannot conceive or comprehend? Does he understand the nature of mind? Does he know why or how he thinks? Does he comprehend the process by which an acorn becomes an oak—by which the nourishment it draws from earth is changed to wood? We venture to say, No. But does he, therefore, refuse to believe that mind exists, or that the acorn produces an oak? Does he fully understand the nature and essence of magnetism and electricity? But does he deny that there are such fluids? Does he "comprehend the primary cause of the light, by which he sees; or of the elasticity of the air by which he hears; or of the fire, by which he is warmed?" Can he tell what first gave motion to the heart or the lungs, or what continues it? Can he explain the cause of animal heat? Does he know what gravitation is? To none of these questions can he give an affirmative answer. But because he cannot comprehend these things, does he therefore refuse to believe in the existence of light, and

air, and heat ? Does he deny that the heart and lungs move, or that there is such an influence or principle as gravity ? No ; in the existence of all these he believes without hesitation. Where then is the propriety or philosophy of denying the existence of God, because he cannot comprehend it ? But the absurdity of this is yet to come.

5. He will not believe in God, because he cannot conceive of an uncreated self-existent being, and asks with a sort of triumph, Who made God ? And with the same tone of triumph we might ask, Who made matter ? He asserts that matter is eternal, and on this ground we put the question to him, If he can any more easily conceive of uncreated, self-existent matter, than he can of uncreated, self-existent Intelligence ? To most minds, it is presumed, the former would come loaded with as much obscurity, and as many difficulties as the latter ; yet the sceptic unhesitatingly receives the one, and as unhesitatingly rejects the other. By what philosophical or logical rules he does this, we know not ; but one thing we know, that the very admission of the eternity and self existence of matter destroys the foundation of his theory, and deprives him of all farther objection to the being of a God. For by whatever rule he proves the eternity and self-existence of matter, by the same rule we pledge ourselves to prove the eternity and self-existence of Intelligence. We say to him then—proceed to the proof, and every step you take for yourself is one for us, and whenever you establish your own position, you establish ours by the side of it ; and if you can believe the one, it will require no greater stretch of faith to believe the other.

6. It may be, however, that the sceptic will say here, that, the eternity of matter admitted, it possesses certain inherent properties or tendencies, which may have effected the present arrangement of things. This is mere as-



sertion, and we might meet it with a contrary assertion and there leave it. But, if granted, it does not change the complexion of the preceding argument. It is still true, that the same rule which proves the eternity of matter will also prove the eternity of Intelligence ; it is still true that it is as easy to conceive of, and to believe, the one as the other. Nevertheless, as we are not disposed to avoid any argument which may be offered, we shall give this an examination in the next section.

### SECTION III.

#### AN EXAMINATION OF THE ARGUMENT FOUNDED ON THE PROPERTIES OF MATTER.

1. Another way of avoiding the evidence of the being of a God, drawn from the design and contrivance manifested in the physical universe, is to affirm that the inherent properties of matter are sufficient to have produced that harmony to which we give so much weight—sufficient for all the results on which the argument is based. But what is this but sheer declamation? How is this assertion to be proved? Where are the facts to show that the inherent properties of matter are sufficient for the production of this wonderful universe, and all the order and arrangement; the beautiful and beneficent adaptation of means to ends, which so fill the beholder with astonishment and admiration? What are the properties of matter which it is affirmed are adequate to the production of these stupendous results? which are sufficient, not only to keep the machinery running, but to build and set up the machine itself? We cannot take bare assertion in a matter of such

\* There is a great error in this reasoning about the properties of matter, which lies in the not making a proper distinction between the properties of matter and the disposition of matter, or the relative situation of one portion to another. This is a distinction of great importance in the argument, and yet it has been almost entirely overlooked. Let us take an illustration, that our

moment as this. We cannot allow in argument an assumption, without one fact as its foundation, made merely to escape the force of reasoning founded on what is actual, palpable, and visible to all.

2. Now we insist that the oft repeated statement, that the necessary properties of matter are abundantly sufficient to account for the existing order of things in the natural world, is bold assertion without one solitary fact in history or science for its support. I say *fact*, for we are not dealing with speculations and theories, with *may-be* or *might-be*, but with realities. Let the analysis of matter be made; let its inherent properties and powers be, one after another, pointed out, and the relations and combinations neces-

meaning may be made plain. It is a property of steel, for example, that it shall cut when sharp; but it is not a property of steel that it shall be sharp. This is the result of another power. It is a property of sulphur, charcoal, &c., that when united in certain definite proportions, they shall possess an explosive power; but it is not a property of sulphur, charcoal, &c., that they shall unite in these definite proportions. This is the effect of calculation. It is a property of the mainspring that it shall be elastic, of glass, that it shall be transparent; but it is not a law of either of these, that it should take its respective place in the watch. The springs, wheels, chains, &c., may have been in possession of their several properties from eternity, if you please, and yet never have formed a watch. The dispositions of these in their relative positions is the work of intelligence.

This, then, is the distinction which we would make between the properties and the dispositions of matter in relation to the universe. The properties of matter never could have formed it into a world, never could have made the present dispositions of it. "If ever a time was, when the structure and dispositions of matter under the present economy of things, were not—there is no force known in nature, and no combination of forces that can account for their commencement. The laws of matter may keep up the working of the machinery, but they did not and could not set up the machine." The argument, therefore, from the laws or inherent properties of matter, fails to account for the present order of things.

sary for the establishment and continuance of the solar system. Let us have the operation in miniature ; let us see matter uniting itself in such proportions and relations as will gradually work itself up in part into a little sun, and dispose its remaining portions in planets of the suitable size, and stationed at proper distances from the central body—and then let the whole start into motion of its own accord. Or, if this is asking too much at once, let each planet take up its position, and of itself commence its revolution, and each of its companions, when it falls into line, do the same thing.

3. If now, this is pronounced unfair, we ask, why ? Is it said that the thing is impossible ? Very good ; we think so too. But if impossible, how then came the solar system, the universe as we find it ? Is it more impossible now than formerly ? For, according to the very assertion in review, this is precisely what matter did do at some time or other, far back in the ages, out of sight. But if the objector refuses the test, and admits that the thing cannot be done now, then how does he know that the inherent properties of matter are sufficient for the production of such results ? Where are his facts ? Why does he say this, if he has nothing to offer in its support ? Plainly, it is naked assertion ; and, as remarked, we might meet it with a simple denial. We are not bound to prove that the propensities of matter are *not* adequate to the establishment of the present system of things. If the sceptic affirms they are, then let him show it ; let him point out the properties on which he bases his assertion. When this is done it will be time enough to give his statement a thorough examination.

4. But let us ask, what power is there inherent in matter to produce any motion, and specially such motion as we find in the solar system ? If the unbeliever were to see a stone whirling past him, he would at once conclude

that some one had thrown it, or put it in motion; for he knows very well that the tendency of the stone is to remain on the earth, and that there is no property of the matter composing it, which could start it up from the earth, and set it in flight. Hence he would reason, as said, that it must have been projected by some power outside of itself, and superior to itself, otherwise it would never have changed its original position—never have had motion. By the same rule, therefore, it is demonstrated that the earth, and the heavenly bodies must have been projected by some power without and above them, or they could not have had motion. They could not have entered upon their revolutions around their centers without a propelling cause, without some foreign impulse, an impulse from a source outside themselves. There is nothing in the matter composing them to set them moving, more than in the matter composing the stone.

5. We are compelled, therefore, to account for their being in motion at all, in the first place; and then for *such* motion, so nicely adjusted to the necessities of the case, so admirably balanced, so perfectly adapted to the condition and wants of the system, in all its departments of life and action. All these particulars, and many others, carefully investigated and weighed in the balance of an unprejudiced judgment, will lead to the conviction that the properties of matter, which are sufficient for such a work, must approach marvelously near to what is called intelligence—so near that the difference is not worth debating.

6. Consider, for example, the exact adjustment of the centripetal and centrifugal forces, which is one of the most wonderful facts of the physical universe. How perfectly must the velocity and force with which each planet was projected, have been proportioned to the quantity of its matter, and to the distance from the sun, at which its revolution was to commence, or, in other words, to the radius

of its orbit. Any essential alteration in any of these conditions would be destructive of the whole order and arrangement. If the velocity is increased to any considerable extent, without a corresponding increase of matter, the distance from the center being the same, the orbit will be changed from the circular to a very eccentric ellipse, and the planet will fly off into infinite space. If the quantity of matter be greatly increased, the velocity and distance remaining the same, then it will speedily approach the central body or sun, and finally fall into it. With what exquisite precision, then, must these forces have been balanced to escape the catastrophe which threatened on either hand. And the exact line of projection, and the velocity, both lay within very narrow limits. If the direction in which the body was projected had been right, and the velocity had varied a very little either way, then the desired result would not have been gained. On the other hand, if the velocity, or force of propulsion, had been precisely right, and the line of direction had essentially varied from what it was, then the end aimed at would have been lost, and the present arrangement of the solar system could not have existed.

7. Now we ask any reasonable person if this nice and delicate adjustment does not lead us irresistably to an intelligent, thinking designing cause? Is it possible for any unprejudiced mind to believe that blind dead matter has any properties inherent in itself, adequate to such beautiful and splendid results? And then add to these the revolution of the planets on their axes, the inclination of the axes to the ecliptic or the plane of their orbits, and the manifold other adaptations of the system, and repeat the question, What properties of matter can be pointed out as involving, of necessity, these arrangements? And yet how necessary to the existence and comfort of man. Is matter endowed with any instincts which enabled it, when it set about

world-making, to foresee that the human race would come into being in some future age, and that summer and winter, seed time and harvest, day and night, would consequently be a very convenient and agreeable arrangement for them? And foreseeing this, did it, or its inherent properties, dispose the order of things accordingly? If so, as we have observed, it is so very like intelligence, that the difference is not worth disputing about. Whoever can believe this, however, whoever can thus endow matter with intelligent properties or attributes, and ascribe to it all the marvelous order and adaptation of the universe, the skill, and wisdom, and beneficence which meet us everywhere—such an one ought to be the last person in the world to talk about credulity, about others believing without evidence.

8. There remains now but one other refuge to which the sceptic can retreat, and that a desperate one. He may affirm at this point, that the whole may have been the result of mere accident or chance. Matter must necessarily have had some forms and dispositions, and they may as well have been such as they are, as any others!

## SECTION IV.

### AN EXAMINATION OF THE ARGUMENT FROM CHANCE.

1. It would seem that no supposition can be more unreasonable, than that which attributes to the effect of chance, the creation of the world, the organization of man, and other equally wonderful phenomena with which we are surrounded. It can hardly be credited, that even the wildest and most visionary fancy could have conceived such an extravagant idea.\* “How long, says Bishop Tillotson, “might twenty thousand blind men, who should be sent out from several remote parts of England, wander up and down, before they would all meet upon Salisbury Plain, and fall into rank and file in the exact order of an army? And yet, this is much more easy to be imagined, than how the innumerable blind parts of matter should rendezvous themselves into a world. How long might a man be, in sprinkling colors upon canvass with a care-

\* La Place has shown by a mathematical calculation, that the probability that the complicated motions of the solar system should have happened by chance, or without design and plan, without the operation of a superintending mind, is as 2 :  $2^{47}$ , or 2 to 4,398,046,511,103! Montesquieu says, “They who assert that a blind fatality produced the various effects we behold in this world, talk very absurdly; for can anything be more unreasonable than to pretend that a blind fatality could be productive of intelligent beings?—*Spirit of Laws*, Book I, chap. i, near the beginning.



less hand, before they would happen to make the exact picture of a man? And is a man easier made by chance than his picture?"

2. Its absurdity and absolute impossibility will be fully seen, if we attempt to make a single practical application of it. Let us consider, for example, what chance must have accomplished before it could have made a man. To have effected this, it must have happened that bone formed itself, and then assumed the shape of a globe—matter must have accidentally combined in such a remarkable manner as to have produced brain, and then must have chanced to fall into the globe of bone—and so came the head. This needed eyes, ears, &c., and consequently a most astounding concurrence of atoms must have happened to result in the formation of an eye, with all its complicate apparatus for vision; and stranger still, by another most skillfully fortuitous circumstance, there happened to come up another eye, a perfect fac-simile of the former; and then, very fortunately, both happened to drop right into the sockets which happened to be made for them. Other atoms, following the example of those just named, fell to happening, and so brought forth two ears, which happened to jump into their respective places in the same way. Then came another lucky concourse, and gave birth to a nose, which very properly took its place where we find it. And finally, the whole atomic world happened to take the hint that a man was to be formed, and set fortuitously to work. Soon there appeared a portion of atoms ranging themselves under the nose in such way as to leave an opening for the mouth, and then the teeth, which other atoms had formed, came marching up in regular order, and, filing off at the entrance to right and left, took up their several positions in true military style, chance leading the van. In another quarter atoms happened to come together in the shape of sinews, muscles, nerves, vessels, &c., and set to forming one

arm here and another there, hands, feet, legs, and so on to the end of the chapter. When these had all happened to be made, then, as by common consent, they happened to move towards each other, and, giving and receiving mutual salutations, united, and thus formed the frame of man. Then the blood happened to commence circulation, because the heart happened to take to contracting and dilating; and the lungs happened to draw in the air, because this happened to be indispensably necessary to the blood. But, more wonderful yet, just at this moment something happened to begin to think, and being pleased with it, kept on thinking, until, with the consent and co-operation of the body, it thought itself into a man. Such was the first feat of chance; but it did not stop here. As if to heap wonder upon wonder, and make that stranger which was strangest already, another routine of fortuitous concurrence casually happened, and proved to be precisely like the other, inasmuch as it ended in the production of another being of the same kind with the former.\* This closed the drama, for certain it is that, for some unaccountable reason, chance has never attempted the thing since, nor made any approximation to it.

3. Will it be said by the sceptic that this is ridicule, that it is an unfair way of stating the question? If so, will he show how it can be more fairly stated? Indeed we have

\* Every one knows that there must have been originally a man and a woman; consequently chance must have hit twice on the same fortuitous concurrence. Suppose the man to have lived an hundred years, the woman must have been formed in that space of time. Admit the sceptic's assertion, that our race has existed millions of years—is it not queer, then, that chance should have been so fortunate, as to have produced this astonishing organization twice in the brief space of an hundred years, and in the long lapse of millions of ages should not have stumbled upon it again? nor even have hit upon an eye, or a hand, or a mouth, or some such trifle? To us it is very queer.

no conception of any method by which to explain the formation of man from chance, that will not make it appear in some such light as that in which we have just seen it. If it be ridiculous, it is owing to the subject itself, and not to the exposition of it. We frankly confess that we have not the power to make it more ludicrous than it really is. The unbeliever may complain, but he complains without cause; we have presented his theory in its true light, and if, when seen in its naked folly, he becomes ashamed of it, let him not say that it is ridicule, or that we have stated the case unfairly. There is no call for ridicule—no necessity for forced argument. The idea that the human body, with its admirable and unequalled mechanism—that the countless forms of animal and vegetable organization—that the world with all its harmony and beauty—the idea that these are but the effect of blind chance, carries upon its very face an absurdity too palpable to be made more so by borrowed ridicule.

4. It will avail nothing here to say, that matter must have had some forms, and that they were as likely to be such as they are as any other. This is but a refuge of words; it does not remove the absurdity. Because matter must have had some forms, does it follow that these must have been an eye, an ear, or a heart? If so, why should it not take the form of a cotton factory, a steam engine, or even a stage coach? There are an hundred probabilities for either of these, to one for a man. Or, if the planetary system owes its existence to the fact that matter must have had some form, why do we not see matter occasionally taking the form of a twelve inch globe, or an orrery? This would be far easier for it. But suppose we grant that matter may have formed itself into an eye, does this prove that the eye must have taken its place in the head? why not in the foot, or in the back? Or, if matter took the form of a heart, why should this have been just

where it was wanted ? why was it not in the head, or at the end of the arm ? So that, after all, this attempt to escape from the absurdity is frustrated. The unbeliever is again reduced to chance, and is forced to admit not only that chance made the several parts of the human body, but that it also arranged and put them together, and then, to crown the whole, set the machinery to working, and has kept it working ever since ! If he can believe this, and all the other inconsistencies associated with it, he must have a faith tenfold more elastic than he who simply believes there is a God.

5. We are aware that there is one other shape into which this doctrine is resolved, and which, in the opinion of its advocates, gives it an air of respectability, or serves at least measurably to cover its nakedness. Though it really does appear somewhat more decent than the bare, brazen assertion of absolute chance ; yet, when analyzed, it is in truth the same assertion, and nothing more nor less. In treating of this particular, however, we shall borrow directly from one who has handled it with the skill of a master. We need make no apology for the length of the extract, for we are satisfied that the reader will feel obliged by its insertion.

6. " In order to lessen the difficulty of man's production with all that complicated and beautiful organization which he now possesses, we are sometimes told that he is not now what he was at his first formation ; that the primitive man probably differed more from the actual man, than the quadruped from the insect ; that something very imperfect was produced by the earth, or by nature, which in the long process of ages, gradually improved until it became a human being. Some modern naturalists have expended no small portion of labor and science, to prove this imperceptible gradation. Nature, it is assumed, first produced animalcules, or some rude specimens of animal life, of the very

lowest kind ; in process of time, these, by an original tendency to a higher state of being, and influenced by external circumstances, put forth the rudiments of some new part or organ, which, in the course of many generations, became more perfect ; these again, continuing in the progress of ages to advance, improving their organization at every step, formed at length the superior animals which we now see inhabiting the earth, while circumstances less favorable, left others behind in this march of improvement. It is further assumed, that the endeavors which the force of circumstances produced to exercise any power, gradually formed an organization adapted to such a power or faculty ; thus, in some, many efforts to swim produced fins where they were needed ; and in others, the desire and the frequent attempts to fly, originated wings, and that all the varied faculties and organs which any animal possesses were produced in the same way ; thus, at length, some very fortunate species of a very high ancestry passed into the condition of monkeys and apes—and thence, by successive gradations, acquired the form and the rationality of human beings. There is, however, in this theory, the same vitiating defect which pervades every attempt to account for all the wonders of the human frame, without a creating intelligence—that wants facts to support it. Nor is this all ; facts are decidedly against it. If the infusoria, those imperceptible specks, myriads of which may be sporting in a drop of water, without being detected by the clearest sight in the brightest sunshine—if these microscopic beings be selected as the efforts of nature, so far from being so very deficient in organization as this system supposes, recent discoveries have shown that they are possessed of a well constructed apparatus for digesting and assimilating their food, and for performing all the functions of life ; that each, indeed possesses an organization so exquisitely minute, and yet so completely adapted

to its condition, as to afford in itself a strong and unanswerable argument for the existence of an intelligent Creator. Nor is the gradation in the scale of being so complete as this hypothesis would assume; there are so many large chasms and discrepancies as appear to make strongly against it. But waving these points, we ask for proofs, for well-authenticated facts, as evidence of any one species of animals passing from a lower to an essentially different and higher form of existence. Do the whole records of history contain one credible instance of this transmutation of species, of this advance upwards, so that completely new organs are acquired? Have all the extended researches of modern travellers and scientific naturalists furnished an instance of that intermediate state which must mark the transition of a dog to an ape, or that of an ape to a man? Has the dog, domesticated as he is, in constant intercourse with man, amidst all the improvements of his natural instincts, and his acquirement of new habits, in all the numerous varieties of size, and shape, and color, in which he is found, and after all his successive generations, put forth one new organ, or made any nearer approach in his anatomical structure to the monkey tribe? Has an ourang outang ever been discovered in his intermediate stage towards a human being, either in the constitution of his body, in his power to utter articulate sounds, or in any of those exhibitions of intellect which form a broad and marked line of separation between man and the brute creation? In the total absence of facts to support such a fancy, there are facts which can be adduced of a kind entirely opposite. We have the means of ascertaining, with an accuracy far surpassing that of verbal description, what was the anatomical structure of many existing races of animals, three thousand years ago. 'It seems,' say the professors of the museum of Paris, 'as if the superstition of the ancient Egyptians had been in-

spired by nature, with a view of transmitting to after ages a monument of her history. That extraordinary and whimsical people, by embalming with so much care the brutes which were the objects of their stupid adoration, have left us, in their sacred grottos, cabinets of zoology almost complete. The climate has conspired with the art of embalming, to preserve their bodies from corruption; and we can now assure ourselves by our own eyes, what was the state of a great number of species three thousand years ago. We can scarcely restrain the transports of our imagination, on beholding thus preserved, with their minutest bones, with the smallest portions of their skin, and in every particular most perfectly recognizable, many an animal, which, at Thebes or Memphis, two or three thousand years ago, had its own priests and altars.'” Did the inspection of these animals, every minute part of which was in so complete a state of preservation, justify the visionary theory to which we now refer? On the contrary, in no representative of a former race, whether wild or domestic, thus examined, was any specific difference seen, nor was there the slightest reason to suppose that three thousand years had in any degree altered any one species; but proof incontrovertible was afforded that no tendency to improvement, however combined with external circumstances, has to this day brought up the ibis or the crocodile, the cat or the dog, to any higher state of organization approaching towards that of a human being; and that no remove at all has been made from the rank in which they have been, and in which we have every reason to believe they will continue as long as their respective races exist. An essential part of this scientific fiction is, that the functions of organs and the uses of parts, did not originally spring from their structure, but that certain acts, and habits, and modes of living, have in reality produced every peculiarity of organization. We see, indeed, in the

structure of animals of various kinds, many provisions for repairing and healing, and even in some cases for reproducing a part; these seem to arise from the same wise and benevolent intentions which appear in innumerable instances throughout the whole of the animal economy, as safeguards to the many accidents to which life is exposed; in all these cases, however, we see no new organ or faculty, which removes its subject from one species to another. But to suppose that the continued desire to stand upright, and the experiment, often tried, to walk erect, produced that perfection of ingenious arrangement which the bones of the foot display; that by the efforts of many generations, fingers grew out of the hand, furnished with all their joints, and muscles, and tendons; and that, to render it complete, a thumb grew up, just in the very situation and acting in the only way in which it could give the hand its use and power—to suppose that the curious machinery of the ear was formed by the long continued attempts to catch and distinguish the vibrations of the air;—and that all the exquisite apparatus of the eye, with its coats and humors, and nerves, and muscles, and self-adjusting iris, was produced by frequent attempts at seeing,—is completely the romance of science; and such a romance as, certainly, is not outdone by all the wild fictions of the Arabian Nights, or the ludicrous extravagancies of Lilliput or Brobdingnag.”\*

\* Godwin against Atheism, pp. 214–220. This is a volume of the very first class, and deserves most richly to be universally read. This theory has recently been revived, and argued with much ingenuity, and not a little show of science, in the “Vestiges of Creation.” But the careful reader will discover that many important links are wanting in the chain; and that the indispensable conditions of the above argument of Godwin are looked for in vain. The attempts to show the points of connection and process of transmutation, are ingenious, but unsatisfactory.



6. Before closing this part of our subject, we have one word to add. When speaking, in paragraph 2, of the absurdities of the doctrine of chance, it was observed that the sceptic might call it ridicule, when in truth, whatever of the ludicrous there might be, was the legitimate offspring of his position. We repeat the same here. We mean nothing of ridicule, and we insist that the sceptic shall not charge the inconsistencies and absurdities of his doctrine to this account. Let them stay where they belong, and if he is ashamed of the offspring, let him abandon the parent. The truth is, there is no middle way between Intelligence and Chance. Our friends may talk as learnedly as they please, about "the laws of nature," the "eternity of matter," and the "laws," and "tendencies," and "affinities," and "analogies" of matter; it is, after all, a mere heaping together of words. If God did not make man, chance did—if God did not make the world, chance made it. If they deny that there is a Supreme Intelligence, they must come down to naked chance; for, we say again, there is no middle way; the moment we leave the one, we step into the boundaries of the other. And we insist, that if they deny the existence of God, they shall be driven from the coverts of "nature," "analogies," "inherent properties," &c., and be made to stand on the open ground of chance, and abide its absurdities. And we press it upon them—if there is no God—the world, man, every thing, is reduced to chance, *bare, unvarnished* CHANCE, and here they must meet it.

7. In the next chapter we shall proceed to give some of the direct evidences for the existence of a Supreme Intelligence. In doing this, we shall be as brief as the nature of the subject will admit.

## CHAPTER II.

### DIRECT EVIDENCES OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

#### SECTION I.

##### EVIDENCE FROM THE HUMAN BODY.

##### I. *Illustration.*

1. We have before us a book. And what is a book? It is a combination of various articles having certain remarkable relations to each other. What are these articles—what is the character of their several relations—and do these relations give us reason to suppose that they are the result of design? Let us examine, and if possible, ascertain. We find, in the first place, that what are called its covers are composed of pieces of thin wood, of a definite shape, the surfaces, sides, and ends being perfectly smooth,—these are enclosed in linen, which conforms in shape to their own, and are thus connected together, leaving a space between. This space, we discover, is filled up with some hundred, or more, of leaves, or pieces of white paper, every one of which is found to resemble, in form, the covers, or the wood and linen just mentioned. In opening these for farther examination, we find two or three to be blank, but on coming to the next, we meet with certain little things called letters impressed thereon. On looking at them more closely, we find that they are arranged in a

certain specific order, and when taken together have a certain definite signification which has reference to something that is to follow. In turning the leaves, we see them all covered with other letters of a smaller, and in some respects, of a different shape, but still so arranged as always to embody some meaning which is comprehended by the mind as soon as they meet the eye. Continuing to pursue our investigation, we find that at various distances there are interruptions to the regular succession of these letters, followed by a brief space which is left blank. When it commences again, there is constantly placed at the beginning some few letters of the same size and shape with a portion of those upon the first leaf, and they have invariably relation to the smaller ones that come after. Thus it proceeds to the end. Now, if we turn back again to the first page, we shall discover, in the upper right hand corner, the figure 1, and on the next page, the figure 2, and on the next, the figure 3; and by casting the eye from page to page, it will be discovered that the figures follow each other in their exact relative order to the close of the book. If we take one step farther in the investigation, we shall ascertain that all these leaves, thus filled with letters, and regularly numbered, are bound together by means of threads passing through them from one side to the other; and that thus connected, the whole is fastened to the covers before named. Lastly, if we close the volume, and bring the back to view, it will be seen that certain letters are impressed there, of the same form with those upon the first page, arranged in the same manner, and signifying the same thing.

2. Such are the materials of which the book before us is composed, and such their relations to each other. With the information afforded by this examination, we are prepared to decide whether this book is the result of design. It is presumed that no man, in the full possession of his

reason, would deny that there are marks of design here, of thought, of intelligence. So plainly does this appear in every part, so legibly is it written upon every one of the materials, and in the perfect adaptation of these to specific purposes, it would be regarded as an evidence of insanity to say that the book was not produced by contrivance—that it had no maker. One might as well say that day was not the effect of the sun's light; he might as well deny his own existence; he would as soon be believed, and such assertions would not be considered greater absurdities. Contrivance is seen as readily as the book itself, and to look upon one is to look upon the other. No part can be named where there is not some mark of mind. The wood and linen of the covers show it in their form and union; the paper proves it by its composition and shape; the letters prove it in the same way, and by their exact and intelligent arrangement; the figures afford the same witness from the same source; the threads which bind the whole together, the gum, the paste, in their respective places; every thing about it manifests design separately; and as a whole, it establishes it beyond the reach of doubt.

3. This point being demonstrated, the conclusion is very plain and certain. Design necessarily supposes a designer; contrivance must have had a contriver; and hence, the book being the result of design, or being itself a contrivance, must have had a contriver—must have had an intelligent, thinking, reasoning maker. With regard to this, there will be no dispute; it is the legitimate consequence of the first position, and must and will be universally admitted. Let us proceed then to make an application of the argument to the subject in discussion.

## II. *The Human Body.*

1. I am a living being; but this does not satisfy me; I wish to know more about myself. How am I constituted?

Or, rather, what are the parts and portions of my composition? what are the relations which exist between them? and do these relations manifest design, or give evidence of being the result of contrivance? Let me examine myself, and endeavor to ascertain. I find in the first place that I have what is termed a head, composed of, within, a mass of nervous matter of the most delicate and curious structure, performing certain very important functions; and, without, a number of bones so shaped and joined one with another as to form nearly a sphere, being a complete protection to the mass within. This is covered with a portion of flesh of a like shape, exactly fitting every part of the sphere; and this again is surmounted with a thick covering of hair. In connection with the head I find two ears, or organs for the reception of sound, one on each side, directly opposite; and so nicely constituted that they harmonize in their operations as to time and force, so that any noise or sound is heard at the same moment and with equal power by both; and such is the exact and perfect connection one with the other, that, though having two organs, I hear the sound as if I had but one. Next to these come two eyes, the structure of which is so delicate, so minute, and complex, that one cannot examine it without being wrapped in admiration and astonishment. I cannot stay, however, to develop these wonders; but must pass with simply saying that these two organs likewise produce but a single effect. They are placed at that precise geometrical distance which blends the vision of both eyes into one, so that, although the object is painted on the retina of each, it is still seen but as one, and conveys but one impression to the mind. I find next that I have a nose, which gives cognisance of objects in relation to other qualities, and performs certain important duties. Next comes a mouth, fitted with a most singular apparatus, by which I am ena-

bled to break into smaller pieces such food as is too large to pass down the throat ; which, by the way, is another most singular and complicated connection of different parts, one with another. On farther examination, I find that the head, as a whole, is joined to the body by a curious combination of bones, which may be called a hinge, so fitted that the head can move freely backward and forward as far as may be convenient or necessary. In addition to this, there is found what has been very properly called a tenon and mortice ; that is to say, there is projection proceeding from the second bone in the neck, which enters a corresponding hole in the bone above it, and by the aid of this the head is enabled to turn from right to left as far round as may be desirable. Next, I meet with what is termed the vertebræ, the spine, or commonly the back-bone. Here is wonder upon wonder to such an extent that it would be vain to attempt a description of them. Suffice it to say, that I find this spine answering all my wants ;—at one time firm, when I would be erect ; and when I would bend or stoop, as flexible as a reed—and at the same time preserving in there different situations a perfect communication by means of a canal passing through the twenty-four pieces of which it is composed. This canal also I find to be of the utmost importance, supplying the body with matter indispensable to its existence ; which is done by pipes going out from it at various points in its progress, which are divided and subdivided, again and again, until they traverse every portion of the frame. In continuing my examination, I find that I have arms, one on each side of my body, so furnished with hinges, and joints, and muscles, that I am able with the aid of the hands, another wonder, to perform any service with them I may need, or my situation may require. I come next to the lungs, the heart, the chest ; but to describe the beauty,

the power, the admirable arrangement and mutual connection and operation of these several parts, would require volumes, and call for a knowledge and an eloquence which are not mine. They must therefore be passed over. The same must be said of the stomach, and the whole apparatus for digestion, for secretion, and for circulation, with all of which I find I am provided in the most perfect manner. Lastly, I discover that the entire body is placed upon what are called the legs, so formed by the union of different bones that they perform most useful and important functions; while to the end of these are added feet, so shaped, so admirably fitted to their respective places, that they support, without difficulty or pain, the whole superstructure which has been examined, and give to it the power of locomotion, transporting it from place to place, at the pleasure of the will.

2. Reader, if you have been with me through the examination just closed, we are prepared to answer the question proposed at the commencement. "Do the relations of the several parts of the human frame evince any thing like design, or do they give us reason to suppose that they are the result of contrivance?" It would seem almost an impossibility that a rational being, after having carefully looked through the human system, could calmly settle down into the conclusion that it afforded no marks of design, gave no proof whatever of intelligence. Yet, strange as it may appear, there have been, there are such anomalies in the thinking world, and that even among us. These do affirm, that they are utterly unable to discover aught in man that would lead them to believe that he was the production of a Superior Mind. Now, it was admitted that the book gave evident token of mind—that its various parts, taken separately and together, established beyond question that it had an intelligent maker. This fact, the unbelievers to whom we allude, will themselves allow,

and indeed no person would so far risk his reputation for sound judgment and sanity as to deny this. To us this is a mystery. We cannot divine how one, having a book and a man before him, can, after patiently examining the structure of both, affirm that the one plainly shows design, while the other shows none; that the one evidently had a maker, while the other as evidently had not. We can form no conception of the process of thought by which he can arrive at a conclusion so directly and positively opposed to the most palpable facts, and so obviously inconsistent with itself. It may be in accordance with the rules of logic and the principles of philosophy—it may be perfectly intelligible in the light of nature; but we are not able to see it thus. Of one thing, nevertheless, we are certain, that, however logical or philosophical this conclusion may be, or however much in harmony with the light of nature, it is most assuredly at war, length and breadth, with plain common sense.

3. The book is a mere cipher, so far as contrivance is concerned, when placed by the side of a man; and its composition, with the connection of its several parts, is nothing compared with the structure of the human body. For every evidence of design in the former, there are found in the latter a hundred more direct and unequivocal; and every proof that the former affords of having had a maker, is met by a score from the latter of a far more palpable and convincing character. What shall we do, then, under these circumstances? What is the most consistent conclusion at which we can arrive? Shall we agree with the objector, that the book is a contrivance, and must have had a maker, and with him affirm that the more complicate and beautiful volume of the human system is *not* a contrivance, and could not have had a maker? Let us pause a moment, and inquire if this be the result of our examination; inquire if the heart, if the head, ap-



prove the decision. Yea, as much hath been said of the powers and infallibility of Reason, let us even ask if she will guide us to this end. Truly, if it hath come to this, we may well say with Young,—

“This is not reason’s dictate ; Reason says,  
Close with the side where one grain turns the scale :  
What vast preponderance is here ! Can Reason  
With louder voice exclaim—‘ Believe a God ? ’ ”

## SECTION II.

### EVIDENCE OF DESIGN IN INDIVIDUAL PARTS OF THE BODY.

1. Thus far we have looked at the human body as a whole, or, as a collection of parts for specific purposes. Let us now examine some of these parts separately, and it will be found, that each one, of itself, furnishes a distinct and entire argument in proof of an Intelligence adapting means to ends with a wonderful skill and precision. In this department we shall freely borrow from those who have written, more especially with reference to this subject, and shall avail ourselves of whatever may be to our purpose.

2. The first example of mechanical contrivance to which attention will be called, is that of the *arm*. The motions which this member was required to perform are various, and its adaptations are exactly fitted to these motions throughout. Beginning at the shoulder, we find there was needed a motion in every direction, and this is provided for by what has been called the ball and socket joint, which is formed by a convex or globular extremity playing into a kind of cup. The little girl's "cup and ball" is an illustration of it; the ball being elongated to represent the bone of the arm. Such a joint admits of motion, in any direction, which was exactly what was necessary here, as all the other movements of the arm depend upon it. A hinge joint, like that which enables the head

to move up and down, would not have answered the purpose, as this would only have swung the arm backward and forward, without the rotary movement, which is essential to its utility.

3. But if the arm had only one bone from the shoulder to the hand, it would have been extremely awkward, and we could never have conveyed food to our mouths. As this was an important duty to be discharged by the hand, it was provided for by dividing the arm at the elbow into two parts, and fitting in there a hinge joint. By the aid of this, the arm is bent at pleasure, and a communication is opened between the mouth and hand. Is there no design here? Is there no adaptation of means to ends? But this is not all. Had that part of the arm between the elbow and the wrist been of one piece, the hand would have remained always in one relative position; it could not have turned round upon itself as it does now. As this would have been exceedingly inconvenient, the difficulty is obviated by employing two bones lying along side of each other, the one of which is connected with the upper part of the arm by the hinge joint already mentioned, giving the motion up and down, and the other, to which the hand is attached, plays upon this by a ball and socket joint at each end, furnishing the rotary motion by which the palm of the hand is turned as we will. And all these movements may be carried on at the same time! We ask if anything can be more plainly mechanical than this construction of the arm? We ask if more palpable proof of design, and provision for foreseen wants, can be given?

4. "The *joints*, or rather the ends of the bones which form them, display also in their configuration, another use. The nerves, blood-vessels, and tendons, which are necessary to the life, or for the motion of the limbs, must, it is evident, in their way from the trunk of the body to the place of their destination, travel over movable joints; and

it is no less evident, that, in this part of their course, they will have, from sudden motions and abrupt changes of curvature, to encounter the danger of compression, attrition, or laceration. To guard fibres so tender against consequences so injurious, their path is in those parts protected with peculiar care; and that by a provision in the figure of the bones themselves. The nerves which supply the *fore-arm*, especially the inferior cubital nerves, are at the elbow conducted, by a kind of covered way, under the inner extuberances of the bone which composes the upper part of the arm. At the *knee*, the extremity of the thigh-bone is divided by a sinus or cliff into two heads or protuberances; and these heads on the back part stand out beyond the cylinder of the bone. Through the hollow, which lies between the hind parts of these two heads, that is to say, under the ham, between the ham-strings, and within the concave recess of the bone formed by the extuberances on each side; in a word, along a defile, between rocks, pass the great vessels and nerves which go to the leg. In the joint at the *shoulder*, in the edge of the cup which receives the head of the bone, is a *notch*, which is joined or covered at the top with a ligament. Through this hole, thus guarded, the blood-vessels steal to their destination in the arm, instead of mounting over the edge of the concavity. Who led these vessels by a road so defended and secured?" \*

5. The care manifest in the preservation of the joints is also worthy of remark. They are to be in use forty, sixty, and even an hundred years, and one would think that they would wear out before that time, from mere friction. But

\* Paley's Nat. Theology, c. viii. In the forefoot of the Lion, where any injury to the artery might be followed with fatal consequences, that artery is buried in the very bone itself! Is there any design here? Does this arrangement look like intentional protection?

there is provision made against this; the same Intelligence that made the joints, made them to wear. To accomplish this, the ends of the bones are covered with a cartilage or gristle, soft and smooth as polished ivory, which effectually prevents the attrition of the bones, or their rubbing one against the other. But there is something more than this. To make the joint run easy, there are vessels secreting a kind of mucilage, and which are so situated, as to drop this oil upon the joints in just the quantity that is wanted. If the reader has ever traveled upon a rail-road, he will probably recollect, that at the stopping places, as they are called, a person goes from car to car, with a vessel of oil, which he pours upon the axle upon which the wheels revolve, for the purpose of making them run easy, and of preventing friction. How much superior is the provision for the joints! Here the vessel prepares its own oil, fills itself, and of itself lubricates the *axle* as it is needed, without stopping the wheel. Can anything be more beautiful? Can anything more plainly evince design? Once more. To finish the mechanism, these joints, for the purpose of preventing dislocation, are strongly fastened together by means of ligaments of an elastic substance, which, while it gives strength, at the same time admits of free motion to the limb. We know not how any one can look upon this studied arrangement, without the conviction that it is the work of Intelligence. It seems to us impossible to resist this conviction.

6. In the next place, we will briefly notice the disposition of the *muscles*. Every muscle that moves a bone has its antagonist, which acts in an opposite or different direction. A single muscle only to every bone would be of no use, as it would leave the body wholly incapable of action. There is, therefore, so to speak, a restoring muscle always provided for one which acts positively. There is a muscle to open the eye, and another acting in an opposite direc-

tion to shut it. There is a muscle to turn the head, and an antagonist muscle to bring it back again to its natural position; and so on through the whole catalogue. It is easy to see that without this antagonistic action, our limbs would be useless; for, having once turned the head, it would forever remain so; or, having once opened the eye or mouth, it would never be closed again. But by this wise provision of opposing muscles, the whole machinery works to perfect satisfaction.

7. Another fact in relation to the muscles may be profitably noticed. The number is very large; those by which voluntary motion is performed, are no less than four hundred and thirty six, and it is truly wonderful that they are so admirably arranged, as not in the least to interfere with each other. They pass in every direction, over and under, and even through each other, thus changing the direction of their power after the manner of a loop or pulley. And yet, with all this, there is no entangling, no interruption. Sometimes they act by means of tendons, where a large muscle would be inconvenient. The muscles which move the toes are an example of this. They are placed for the sake of symmetry in the leg, and tendons attached to them run down the leg in a sheath, until they reach the instep, where they are carefully strapped down with ligaments, and under these proceed to the toes to which they are fastened. Is it possible for the most skillful contrivance to have planned this better? The same is true of the muscles which move the fingers. Instead of being placed in the back of the hand, which would have been very inconvenient and clumsy, they are carried up along the arm, and act by means of tendons running from them to the fingers, and carefully strapped or tied down at the wrist.\*

\* The composition of the muscle is perfectly mechanical. "It consists of fibres which lie parallel to each other. A single muscle

8. In these examples, there is the most palpable evidence of mechanical contrivance. The windlass of a well is, perhaps, a good illustration of the last mentioned. In this case, we see the moving power, which is the windlass, placed at a distance from the body to be moved, which is the bucket at the bottom of the well; but the object is gained by a rope passing from the windlass to the bucket. This is exactly the plan adopted in the example in question. For convenience the moving body, which is the muscle, is placed at a distance from the body to be moved, which is the finger or fingers; but the movement is effected by minute ropes or tendons, passing from the muscles to the fingers. So of the loop or pulley muscle. When heavy bodies are to be raised to the upper floor of a high building, instead of standing on the floor to which they are to be raised, and pulling them up, a projecting timber is fixed in the side of the building, at the end of which is fastened a block with a wheel in it; and, the men, passing a rope, one end of which is attached to the weight, through this pulley or block, the direction of the power is changed, and then, standing upon the ground, they pull down, and thus the weight is raised up. This is precisely the contrivance by which some of the muscles are regulated. No one pretends but that the first is design; and why is not the second, by the same rule?

The next example to which our attention will be called is that of the *hand*. "In the first place, it possesses, in an eminent degree, a leading quality of an organ of grasp; since it readily applies itself to, and securely holds, bodies of every

consists of some millions of these fibres combined together, having the same point of attachment or origin, and concentrating in a tendon, which is fixed to a movable part, called its insertion." Bell on the Hand, p. 89. Bridg. Treatise iv. Is not this precisely the way to make a rope, by the union of small threads, and twisting them together? Did a well-finished rope ever happen?

form and size that are capable of being moved by human strength. And because many bodies are of too great a size to be held by one hand alone, there is provided to each a fellow assistant, so that the two are fully equivalent to a hand of the very largest dimensions. Take then any one of those unwieldy bodies which a man can only lay hold of by means of both his hands, as a mill-stone or a rafter, or take one of the smallest objects, as a millet-seed or a hair, or a minute thorn; or, lastly, reflect on that vast multitude of objects of every possible size, intermediate to the greatest and least of those above mentioned; and you will find the hands so exactly capable of grasping each particular one, as if they had been expressly made for that alone. Thus, the smallest things of all, we take up with the tips of the fingers; those which are a little larger, we take up with the same fingers, but not with the tips of them; substances still larger we take up with three fingers, and so on with four, or all the five fingers, or even with the whole hand; all which we could not do, were not the hand divided, and divided precisely as it is. For suppose the thumb were not placed as it is, in opposition to the four fingers, but that all the five were ranged in the same line; is it not evident that in this case their number would be useless? For, in order to have a firm hold of any thing, it is necessary either to grasp it all around, or at least to grasp it in two opposite points; neither of which would have been possible, if all the five fingers had been placed in the same plane; but the end is now fully attainable, simply in consequence of the position of the thumb, which is so placed, and has exactly such a degree of motion, as, by a slight inclination, to be easily made to co-operate with any of the four fingers. And no one can doubt that there has been given to the hands, purposely, a form adapted to that mode of action which they are observed to have; while in the feet, where extent of



surface is wanted for support, all the toes are arranged in the same plane.”\* It would seem almost impossible that one could consider this beautiful piece of mechanism, and not feel that it is the work of Intelligence. So plainly is skill and design written upon it, that it must, it appears to us, cost an exertion of the mind to contemplate it without conviction.

10. We shall here give a brief view of the *heart*, in which we shall discover a double set of machinery, every part of which evinces the most surpassing wisdom, and will give us a high idea of the skill with which the various parts are made to play into each other. We do not know but that there may be some who can examine this important portion of the human system, and yet affirm that they see no design in its wonderful machinery; but if there are such in this world of ours, then we have only to say, that it is not because no design is there, but because they cannot see it. The heart is situated between the lobes of the lungs, and is divided by strong thick partitions into two parts, each of which contains two cavities, the auricle and the ventricle. It is kept in continual action by alternate contraction and dilation, which is the pulse, or, as it is commonly termed, the beating of the heart. From the left ventricle the blood is propelled by contraction, acting as a forcing pump, into the aorta, or main artery, which in its course divides into various branches, which are again subdivided into others, till the ramifications in their minuteness extend to every extremity of the body, and penetrate all the capillary vessels; thence it enters the veins of the returning system, which collect these into larger branches, and, by uniting these into still larger, as rivers are made by the junction of smaller streams, till they all at last flow into the great trunk, which conducts the blood into the right auricle, and this into the right ventricle, on

\*Galen, quoted by Kidd on the Physical Condition of Man. Br.Tr. ii.

the opposite side of the heart from which it went out. This right ventricle propels the blood, thus received, through another set of arteries into the lungs, where, by dispersion through innumerable minute vessels, it is exposed to the action of the air, which fits it again for circulation; and then it is carried back by a corresponding set of veins to the left auricle of the heart, which immediately empties it into the left ventricle, the point from which it started. Here, we may say, are two objects to be accomplished. 1. The circulation of the blood through the system. 2. The preparing it for circulation by bringing it in contact with the air. Two systems were necessary, and two were therefore provided. We have a ventricle to send the blood out into the body, and when this blood has performed its appointed functions, we have an auricle for receiving it back again into the heart. This done, we have another ventricle for throwing it into the lungs, and then, when it has been prepared anew, we have another auricle for conducting it once more to the fountain. Thus we have two receiving vessels, and two forcing pumps, with all the hose attached, for carrying the blood to the distance required. Is there no contrivance here? no mechanical skill? Was there ever a fire engine without a maker? No. How much less a heart, then?

11. It might justly be expected that the blood would, in a great measure, lose the impulse which it received from the contraction of the heart, before it reached its destination, and, therefore, that something must be done to prevent its reflowing by the same channels. This something is done. The difficulty is provided against by furnishing the veins with valves, curiously constructed, and opening in the direction the blood should flow; so that, as long as it keeps on its natural course, no obstacle is presented; but the moment it begins to reflow, these valves are closed by the very action, and effectually prevent its return. And

what is this but design? Surely, a more unequivocal proof of Intelligence cannot be conceived.

12. One example more, and we have done. "There are brought together within the cavity of the *mouth*," says Paley, "more distinct uses, and parts executing more distinct offices, than I think can be found lying so near to one another, or within the same compass, in any other portion of the body; viz., teeth of different shapes, first for cutting, secondly for grinding; muscles artificially disposed for carrying on the compound motion of the lower jaw, half lateral and half vertical, by which the mill is worked; fountains of saliva, springing up in different parts of the cavity, for the moistening of the food, whilst the mastication is going on; glands to feed the fountains; a muscular construction of a very peculiar kind in the back part of the cavity, for the guiding of the prepared aliment into its passage towards the stomach, and in many cases for carrying it along that passage. In the mean time, and within the same cavity, is going on another business, altogether different from what is here described—that of respiration and speech. In addition, therefore, to all that has been mentioned, we have a passage opened from this cavity to the lungs for the admission of air, exclusively of every other substance; we have muscles, some in the larynx, and without number in the tongue, for the purpose of modulating that air in its passage, with a variety, a compass, and a precision, of which no other musical instrument is capable. And, lastly, which in our opinion crowns the whole as a piece of machinery, we have a specific contrivance for dividing the pneumatic part from the mechanical, and for preventing one set of actions interfering with the other. In no apparatus put together by art, and for the purposes of art, do I know such multifarious uses so aptly combined, as in the natural organization of the human mouth, or where the structure, compared with

the uses, is so simple. The mouth with all these intentions to serve, is a single cavity—is one machine—with its parts neither crowded nor confused, and each unembarrassed by the rest; each at least at liberty in a degree sufficient for the end to be obtained.”\* Such is the machinery of the human mouth—and who can look upon it without confessing that it is the work of a skillful Artist!

13. We have now given several of the examples afforded by the human body, in proof that there has been Intelligence at work in its formation. There are many more equally decisive, and perhaps more so, but which would require more lengthy expositions—as the spine, the ear, the eye, all of which give conclusive evidence of design. But it is believed that any candid mind, after having carefully considered the instances already adduced, will admit, what it would seem impossible to deny, that they are the result of intention, the work of contrivance, and, therefore, that they had a Contriver. This is established by each one of the examples mentioned; it is not the consequence only of the whole train. If there were but one arm, or one hand, or one mouth in the world, it would still be certain that it was the production of thought, of design. Yea, if the whole mass should be struck from existence, and only a single eye left; yet would the proof be indubitable, that this eye must have had a maker. Strangely, then, must that mind be constituted, which will not bow to the force of this accumulated evidence; and perverted must be the understanding which refuses to respond to this united testimony, that *there is a God*.

14. In the next section we shall notice very briefly one or two examples of design from the external world, and with these close the direct proofs of a Supreme Intelligence.

\* Natural Theology, c. ix.

### SECTION III.

#### EVIDENCE FROM EXTERNAL NATURE.

1. In looking abroad upon the natural world with a careful eye, we cannot fail to discover certain arrangements and adaptations which give evidence of design. As one example, we might instance the well known fact, that all those animals which supply man with food, are found in greater abundance than those that are of a dangerous character. This certainly appears like a judicious arrangement; for, aside from this, no reason can be given why it should be so. If there be no adaptation here to the wants of the human race, why should cattle, sheep, and swine, be more numerous than lions, tigers, and leopards? Why should turkeys, geese, and ducks, be found congregated in such vast flocks, and this in every clime, while the condor is confined to a single region, and the eagle wings his solitary flight through space with no companion near? Why should cod-fish, and mackerel, and herring, be scattered in countless multitudes all along the shores of the great deep, while swordfish, sharks, &c., compared with these, are strangers in the sea? Does not this abundance of the useful on the one hand, and the scarcity of the hurtful on the other, clearly point out an intelligent and benevolent arrangement?

2. If we go to the deserts of Africa, we shall meet with

an individual adaptation in the animal kingdom which is worthy of all attention. We refer to the *camel*, or, as it has been poetically called, "the ship of the desert." Can anything be offered to show why this animal should be found in these barren wastes, and only here? Can any satisfactory explanation be given of its perfect fitness for the performance of long and painful journeys over these sandy regions, unless we refer the whole to a Wisdom always regulating things according to the circumstances of the human family? \* Here are oceans of burning deserts—without assistance man could not traverse them—he is therefore provided with a ship, in the shape of the camel, most happily adapted in every way to his wants. With this he plunges fearlessly into the sandy deep, and, though surrounded with danger and peril, makes his way safely to the place of his destination. If there be not design here, we know not what to call this arrangement.

3. From the scorched deserts of the equator, we will turn to the frozen regions of the north, and we shall find there another beautiful adaptation among animals to the necessities of man. What can evince this more strikingly

"*Nature*," says Mr. Volney, "has given a small head without ears, at the end of a long neck without flesh. She has taken from its legs and thighs every muscle not immediately requisite for motion; and, in short has bestowed on its withered body only the vessels and tendons necessary to connect its frame together. She has furnished it with a strong jaw, that it may grind the hardest aliments; and lest it should consume too much, she has straitened its stomach, and obliged it to chew the cud." And is there no design here? Mr. Volney may call this admirable adaptation of the camel to its situation and to the wants of the Arab, *nature*, or by any other name he pleases; the name will not alter the thing; it is still Intelligence, as his own words most clearly show, and this Intelligence is our God. We do verily think if ever a man bore witness against himself, Mr. Volney has done it here.

than the manner in which the *rein-deer* is made to answer the wants, wishes, and pleasures of the Laplander? A clearer case of proof in this department cannot be imagined. It seems as if this animal were made expressly to serve the inhabitants of the inhospitable clime where he is found. He requires but little food, subsisting upon shrubs, leaves, and moss, and yet, with this poor fare, will carry his master over the ice-bound plains, at the rate of sixty and even an hundred miles a day. From the milk the Laplander furnishes himself with cheese; the flesh is the main article of food, as is the skin of clothing; the tendons are made into bow-strings, and when split they supply the place of thread for sewing the skins; from the horns is obtained a glue; and the bones are converted into spoons. Is not the rein-deer precisely the animal the Laplander needed? Could a better one have been given him? And is there no design, no adaptation in the perfect manner in which all these various and multiplied wants are met? If there be no evidence of this, then are we wholly ignorant of what constitutes evidence.

4. The planetary system affords another unquestionable proof of design, and clearly exhibits the arrangement of Intelligence. The sun placed in the center, and the regular revolution of the planets around it, and on their axes at the same time, is nothing less than the result of a wise economy. If not, how happened it that the sun should have been fixed in the center? or, if this were the necessary consequence of the laws of matter, why should it also have been a luminous body, giving out light and heat to the rest of the system? Why should not the earth, or Jupiter, or Herschel, have been the repositories of light and heat? Plainly because this would not have answered the purpose; yet, if there be no design here, not the shadow of a reason can be offered why the sun should differ

in these respects from the other bodies.\* We wish that the sceptic would candidly ask himself if this is probably mere accident, and if so, whether he does not think it a most fortunate one? And what explanation can be given of the revolution of the planets upon their axes, except it be intention? Why should the earth, we ask, while going round the sun, whirl round upon itself every twenty-four hours? Would it have been any inconvenience to man if it had not? Would it have made any difference in his condition if there had been no alternation of day and night? We know not how one can resist the evidence of Intelligence in this happy and benevolent disposition of things.

5. If we take a glance at the structure of the solar system, as a whole, we cannot fail to be struck with its wonderful harmony. The motions of the planets all in one direction, and, with little variation, in the same plane; the motions of the secondaries in the same direction with the primaries; their revolutions upon their axes in the same direction also—what can be clearer evidence of intention? If chance gave the planets their motion, why should they not have moved in every direction, to the north and south, and east, and west, and at all possible angles? Would chance have thrown them all in one direction, and in the same plane? and would it have done the same to the satellites? It seems to us that this fact of uniform direction in the planetary motion, is one of the strongest possible proofs of a

\* The immortal Newton saw design here. "How matter," says he, "should divide itself into two sorts; and that part of it which is fit to compose a shining body should fall down into one mass, and make a sun; and the rest, which is fit to compose an opaque body, should coalesce, not into one great body, like the shining matter, but into many little ones—I do not think explicable by mere natural causes, but am forced to ascribe it to the counsel and contrivance of a voluntary Agent." First letter to Bentley, cited by Whewell.



Ruling Intelligence. Add to this, their forms, their orbits, the inclination of the axis, their distances, and the mutually controlling forces by which they are regulated, and we cannot but see the propriety and truth of that beautiful saying of the ancients,—“*God works by geometry.*”

6. Let us take the atmosphere in its relation to animals and plants, as another example. It is well known that atmospheric air is composed of two supposed elementary principles, or gasses, oxygen and nitrogen, or azote. Of these oxygen is the great vital principle, indispensable to the support of animal life. On the other hand, there is a gas called carbonic acid gas, which, if breathed in an unmixed state, is destructive of animal life; while it is at the same time one of the chief sources of vegetable life, without which every plant, from the giant oak to the humble violet, would inevitably perish. In connection with these facts, it is to be observed that, in breathing, atmospheric air is drawn in through the lungs, and decomposed. The oxygen is partly retained, and, by some unknown process, there is generated this carbonic acid gas, which is given out at every expiration.

7. Here, then, we are met with a difficulty, and, if there were no redeeming provision, certain death to the whole animal creation. How is it, if at every breath we extract the oxygen from the air, and give out the life destroying principle of carbon—how is it that the whole atmosphere has not long ago been converted into an ocean of carbonic acid gas? In the answer to this is seen one of the most beautiful harmonies of the universe, and one of the most indubitable proofs of a wise and beneficent design.

8. We have already stated that this gas is one of the principal sources of life to plants. These, therefore, drink it up in the same manner that the human system takes in the oxygen; and thus, what we throw off, and what, if not disposed of in some way, would be our death, is carefully

gathered up by these, and becomes their life, imparting nutriment and growth. How admirable then the adaptation! how palpable the proof of intentional arrangement! But this is not all. It was remarked, that while the animal system gave off this carbonic gas, it retained, in part, the oxygen; thus operating in a double capacity against the purity of atmospheric air, subtracting the vital principle on the one side, and adding a death-causing one on the other. How then is this danger removed? By the same agency. Plants in taking up the carbonic acid gas generated by the respiration of men and animals, decompose it, and, retaining and absorbing the carbon, throw off a portion of the oxygen, and thus aid in keeping up the necessary supply of the vital principle. How perfect is this mutual adaptation! how wonderful the harmony! Who can look upon the process without exclaiming, Here are the footsteps of a God! the manifest work of Wisdom and Benevolence!

9. We appeal to the most inflexible sceptic, to the most stubborn doubter, to say whether on any other subject the evidence would not be regarded by him as sufficient to establish the presence of thought and plan? We ask him if he can persuade himself that all this arrangement, this nice and exquisite adaptation of means to ends, is the result of mere accident or chance? If so, what a fortunate chance! It not only happens to have created man, a most complicate and astonishing piece of machinery; but it happens also to prepare for him an atmosphere exactly suited to his respiratory apparatus; and then, because every time he breathes he happens to corrupt this atmosphere, chance kindly volunteers her assistance, and saves him from death by creating accidentally a vegetable world which happens to be exactly fitted to purify the air, and prepare it again for use. And by a strange and lucky throw of the dice, these vegetables and plants are so made

as to live and grow by absorbing that which would otherwise destroy man and the whole animal creation ! And to believe all this is supposed to be more philosophical than to believe in God ! This is affirmed to be more reasonable than the doctrine, that these beautiful and affecting arrangements and adaptations are the effect of a Wisdom equally wonderful and benevolent ! To us the last proposition is altogether the simplest and most philosophical, and requires a degree of faith far less than the first.

10. One more example and we conclude the argument. It is generally known that one of the great laws of nature is, that heat expands and cold contracts. This law is universal in its application, excepting where the present order of things could not exist without the exception. When heat is applied to a vessel containing liquid, it expands the particles, and of course diminishes their gravity. The consequence is, they make their way up to the surface, giving place to the colder particles, which are affected in the same way, till the whole body is heated. In cooling, the reverse of this process takes place. As the particles on the surface become colder, they contract, and sink down through those that are warmer and lighter. These in their turn pass through the same process, until the whole mass becomes as cold as the surface.

11. Now if this law prevailed without limit or exception, what would be the consequence ? Why plainly, our ponds, rivers, lakes, and a large portion of the ocean itself, would become useless. The cold particles constantly descending, by and by the whole body would be reduced to the freezing point, and the whole mass be changed into ice at once. Or, the surface freezing would sink to the bottom, and other portions of water rising, would freeze and sink in turn, till the entire mass of the water was converted into solid ice, and the earth transformed into an uninhabitable desert ! How, then, is this difficulty rem-

edied? By an exception to the general law, as we have said, just where it was needed, just where it was imperatively necessary to the maintenance of animal and vegetable life.

12. Water, in cooling, follows submissively the established law, until it arrives within eight degrees of the freezing point, and then, as if conscious of the trouble that would result from farther obedience, it starts up into open rebellion, and refuses to go another step in that direction. At this point it begins to expand, and having reached the freezing point, in the very act of freezing, a sudden additional expansion takes place, which renders it lighter than water, so that it floats upon the surface.\* By this arrangement, the surface being frozen, the water below is protected from the intense cold, and kept in a liquid state. What a singular and wonderful operation is this—as clearly and manifestly directed to certain ends, as the heart is designed for circulation, or the eye for seeing. Here is a general law suspended as it were; or an exception introduced, a special arrangement intended to secure an important result, precisely at that point where, without it, the best portion of the earth would have been uninhabitable, destitute of animals and vegetables, without use or beauty. Can there be more positive proof of intention and benevolence?

13. Many other examples might be adduced from external nature, in proof that there has been, and is, Wisdom at work in planning, directing, and adapting, every thing in the best possible manner. And certain are we, that he

\* It is this property of freezing water that explains the breaking of vessels filled with it in winter. The force of this expansion is tremendous. Cannon have been burst by being filled with water and left exposed to intense cold. And the stoutest trees of the forest have been split assunder through the operation of the same power.

who refuses to admit this in the face of the evidence with which he is surrounded, and makes it all the work of chance, manifests, not the less, but a greater credulity than he who believes. For, assuredly, it is no easy matter to conceive of more palpable instances of a designing Mind, than those which have been considered. And if they do not prove the presence of Intelligence, it is difficult to imagine what would; and we would beg to ask the unbeliever, what kind of evidence he requires to satisfy him of this? We should wish to know, if such proof as has been advanced be insufficient, what sort of proof, and how much, would be sufficient to convince him of the existence of a Supreme Intelligence. Will he ask himself this question, and answer it so as to satisfy his own conscience? Again—if the examples which have been mentioned are not the result of thought, of intention, how does he account for their perfect adaptation in all cases? How does he explain the assemblage of mathematical propositions involved in the construction of the planetary system? These are questions to which we have certainly a right to demand answers of him, and they are questions which, if reasonably and rightly answered, must necessarily involve the existence of Deity.

14. Here let us pause, and sum up the whole matter. We have, it is believed, candidly examined the arguments adduced to disprove the existence of a Supreme Being, and have found that they not only fail of their object, but in some cases furnish proof to the contrary—we have looked upon the human body as a whole; have examined some of its parts separately, and have seen the striking manifestations of design and mechanical contrivance which it affords—we have considered the admirable adaptations of the natural world to the condition and necessities of man—we have cast a brief glance at the stupendous and perfect machinery of the planetary system. In all these sev-

eral departments, we have been presented with examples, each one of which ought to be sufficient to satisfy any reasonable mind; and when the whole are accumulated into one mountain of evidence, we see not, we know not, how even the most sceptical can withhold the exclamation—**THERE IS A GOD.**

\*The reader, it is presumed, will not be displeased with the addition here of the sentiments of the great and beloved WASHINGTON. In reply to a gentleman who expressed doubts on the subject discussed above, he gave his opinions thus :

“It is impossible to account for the creation of the universe without the agency of a Supreme Being.

“It is impossible to govern the universe without the aid of a Supreme Being.

“It is impossible to reason without arriving at a Supreme Being. Religion is as necessary to reason, as reason is to religion. The one cannot exist without the other. A reasoning being would lose his reason in attempting to account for the phenomena of nature, had he not a Supreme Being to refer to ; and well has it been said, that *if there had been no God, mankind would have been obliged to imagine one.*” Paulding’s Life of Washington, vol. ii. pp. 209, 210.

It is a singular fact that the notorious Robespierre uttered the same sentiment that is italicized above, and in nearly the same words. In his speech before the Jacobin club of Paris, after Christianity had been abolished, he uses the remarkable expression, “If the Divinity did not exist, a wise legislator would have invented it”! London Quarterly Review for September 1835. Art. *Robespierre*. Here we have the moral antipodes meeting in witness.

## CHAPTER III.

1. A REVELATION REASONABLE AND PROBABLE. 2. INSUFFICIENCY OF THE LIGHT OF NATURE AS A GUIDE.

### SECTION I.

#### A REVELATION REASONABLE AND PROBABLE.

1. THE existence of a God or Supreme Intelligence, we shall now consider as established, and through the remainder of the discussion, the argument will proceed accordingly. The question which next presents itself, in the natural arrangement of the subject, is the following : *Have we any just reasons for supposing that God would make a Revelation to mankind?* Perhaps it will be said, we ought first to prove that it is *possible* for God to make a revelation ; but our answer is, that this is already proved in the existence of God, for it is the height of absurdity to believe that he could create the world, could create man, and yet could not communicate his will unto him if he saw fit. This is so palpable, that it is somewhat singular that Christian writers should make this particular a subject for examination, since it would seem to both parties, one would think, but a waste of words. If the existence of God be proved, the possibility of a revelation is necessarily proved with it ; because with the very idea of God we associate, as part and portion of that idea, all pos-

sible perfection ; and in this is of course included the power to reveal his will to his creatures, when, where, and in whatsoever way he may choose. We shall therefore spend no time or labor on this point, but proceed to the consideration of the proposed question—Have we just reasons for supposing that God would make a revelation to man ?

2. An argument for the probability of some kind of a revelation, partaking of the character of instructions suited to the wants and ignorance of man, may be drawn from the fact, that this is practically the universal admission of mankind. We know it may be said that this is very like assuming the point in debate, but we do not mean it so. All we design to say is, that the practices of all nations directly countenance the proposition in review ; not that there are no individual exceptions, for that is implied in this discussion ; but simply that, as communities, as nations, mankind have everywhere admitted the necessity and probability of revelations or instructions from a higher power. The belief of this formed the basis of all their religious rites and ceremonies, and of much of their jurisprudence and civil government.\* Hence the oracles, omens, auguries, and divinations of ancient times, and the great importance attached to them.

3. Conscious of their own ignorance, and feeling the need of supernatural illumination, they adopted these methods of communication with their deities, and sought thus to draw from them the desired information. No war,

\* There is, aside from its political objects, a very valuable and interesting article on this subject, in the Westminster Review for January, 1836, Art. viii. Republication of the English Reviews, No. xxvii. There is also a passage in Cicero's *De Divinatione*, lib. i. c. 40, in which he expressly declares that the republic was governed by the influence of augury—"republicam religionam auctoritate rexerunt."



no expedition, no undertaking of any consequence, was attempted without consulting the oracles: these were the guides of all public, and in many cases of all private affairs; so that nothing was done without their approbation and direction. In accordance with this, we hear Cicero asking—"What colony has Greece sent into Etolia, or Iona, Asia, Sicily, or Italy, without a reference to the Pythian, the Dodonean, or Ammon oracle? What war did she ever undertake without first consulting her gods?" And again he says, "All the kings of Rome used augury, and when they were expelled, nothing in public affairs, or in private households, or in war, was done without it."\* This fully confirms the statement above made.

4. It is a well known fact, also, that all the celebrated lawgivers of antiquity, as Zoroaster, Minos, Solon, Lycurgus, Numa, &c., pretended that they had intercourse with the gods, and acted under their direction. Zoroaster was enlightened in a mount of fire, through which his god revealed himself; Solon appealed to an oracle; Lycurgus did the same; Numa had his Egeria, from whom he declared his laws were received; while Zaleucas affirmed that his were given him of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom. All this was done in accordance with that feeling which was ever present with the people, that they were not competent to direct their own steps, and therefore needed the guidance of a superior Wisdom.†

5. This particular is confirmed in a remarkable manner

\* Div. l. i., cited by Turner, Sac. Hist. ii. pp. 23, 24. In the same work Cicero affirms—"I know of no nation, however civilized and learned, or fierce and barbarous, which does not think that future things may be signified and predicted to us." Ibid.

† Volney gives the following witness on this point:—It is the unanimous testimony of history, and even of legends, that the first human beings were savages, and that it was to civilize them, and teach them to make bread, that the gods manifested themselves.

by the celebrated heathen geographer Strabo, whose observation on the intercourse between mankind and the Deity, or, as he believed, deities, is worthy of attention. "Whatever," says he, "becomes of the real truth of these relations, this however is certain, that *men did believe them, and think them true*: and, for this reason, prophets were held in such honor as to be thought worthy sometimes of royal dignity, as being persons who delivered precepts and admonitions from the gods, both while they lived, and also after death. Such were Tiresias, Amphiaraus, &c. Such were Moses and his successors."\* Plutarch, after naming Zoroaster, Numa, &c., asks, "Is it not probable that the divinities conversed familiarly with these great men, to inspire them with the glorious enterprises which they executed?"† And Xenophen informs us that Socrates believed that the gods knew all things; that they were "present everywhere, and made suggestions to men concerning human affairs."‡

6. These facts are a practical confession, on the part of the nations, that they stood in need of a divine revelation; that they were not able, without the assistance of heaven, to attain to a correct knowledge of truth and duty. For, if they had felt themselves competent to this, if they had regarded the sources or means of this knowledge as lying within themselves, they would not have resorted to omens, divinations, and oracles. There would have been no place or occasion for these. Their existence, therefore, seems to indicate, in the plainest manner, the consciousness of mankind that there was a necessity for the interposition of

\* Strab. Geog. lib. xvi., cited by Horace.

† Plutarch, Numa. See also notes to *Les Vies de Plutarque, traduites en Français*, par D. Ricard. Paris 1830. Tome ii, 144, 147.

‡ Xen. Mem. lib. i. cap. i.

heaven in their behalf, that the way of truth and duty, of life and blessedness, might be opened to them.

7. It may also very properly be urged, that the existence and pretensions of these false revelations, imply the previous existence of a true one. The just and necessary inference is, that God did speak to man some time or other, else we cannot satisfactorily explain these pretensions on the part of lawgivers and religious teachers. It is a well known rule of reason and of logic, that falsehood implies truth as its opposite. You cannot have the first without the last. So counterfeit coin involves of necessity the existence of genuine coin, for the plain reason, that you cannot counterfeit what has no existence. If you have a copy or a likeness, you must have an original. If you have a false religion or revelation, you must first have a true one as the standard of comparison; the difference from which, or opposition to which, makes the last false. These pretences, therefore, that certain laws and instructions had been received directly from heaven, clearly point to the fact of an original revelation. They are unconscious witnesses of the truth that God in the beginning did declare himself to his children, and specially communicate to them a knowledge of his truth and of their duty. In the passage and the revolutions of ages, scattered abroad over the earth, surrounded by new circumstances, subject to new influences, these divine instructions were gradually forgotten and corrupted, in some cases partially, in others almost wholly; and these pretended revelations from heaven substituted in their place. This seems not only an argument for the reality of a revelation in early times, but also a natural explanation of the past, and to a great extent, present condition of mankind. The principle involved we see in action every day. It is what is going on around us continually.

8. But there are considerations of another nature which

lead to the belief that God would make a special revelation to man. A wise and good parent, if he were about to send his child into a far distant land, to take up his abode there, and knew that the way was a long and painful one, beset with difficulties and perils, seen and unseen, would certainly give that child some instructions as to the course he should pursue. If he loved him, he would not send him forth upon the distant and dangerous journey, without information as to what he was to do, how he was to overcome the difficulties and avoid the perils of the way; without any information respecting the nature of the country to which he was going, or his probable condition there. No father having any shadow of parental affection, would be so utterly indifferent to the safety and welfare of his offspring. So far from this, he would be specially particular in his directions, pointing out the path in all its windings, marking all the difficult places, describing all the dangers, and communicating all necessary information in the most precise and definite manner.

9. Now God is the universal parent; and, placing his children in this world, he has sent them forth upon their life-journey to another. Is it very unreasonable to suppose that he would reveal to them his purpose and aim in doing this? that he would give them some information respecting the journey, the character of the road they were to travel, the difficulties and dangers they would have to encounter, and the best way to conquer them? Is it very hard to believe that he would specially instruct them as to how they should best secure themselves from harm, and fulfill the purpose of their journey? Is it altogether unreasonable and improbable to suppose he would tell them something of the nature of the country to which their steps were directed, and of the heritage they were likely to have in it? On the contrary, if we allow the goodness and the watchful tenderness of the heavenly parent to be only equal to that

of an earthly parent, we shall at once conclude that he could not, that he would not leave his children to enter upon this momentous journey from one world to another, without any information respecting either. A revelation seems the most natural and necessary thing possible under the circumstances. Nay, it is inseparable from the very idea of Creator and Father.

10. It is not marvelous, therefore, that there has been a revelation ; but it would have been marvelous, and an anomaly in nature, if there had not been. There is no other instance in the universe where, had it been so, there is such an utter disregard of the wants and welfare of the creature. Even the humblest animal, the most insignificant insect, is not left without its guiding instinct, without something to direct it into its appointed path, to its appointed end. And shall man, confessedly the noblest of all earthly creatures, capable of accomplishing so great a work, filled with such lofty aspirations, such intense longings, shall he alone be left without any instructive speech from God—without one word of revelation as to what that work is, or whether those longings and aspirations shall be met and answered ? If so, then this is all unnatural. I repeat, there is nothing like it in all the universe. It is an exception to the universal law, and precisely where it is the most inexplicable and most fatal in its effects. It is an accusation equally against the wisdom of the God, and the goodness of the Father. I say again, if there be not a revelation, it is infinitely more wonderful, and a more palpable interruption of the order of nature, than if there be ! It is “contrary to all our experience” in other respects. And it is but just that those who are so extremely sensitive in regard to any exception to the uniform method of the Divine operations, who look with such scientific horror upon any “violation of the laws of nature”—it is

but just that these should consider the question in this light.

11. But there is another reason in this immediate connection, which dictates the reasonableness and probability of a revelation from God to man. One object of revelation is, to unfold to man a knowledge of his Maker, of the relations existing between them, and of the means of approaching him. That such an object is worthy of the Divine interposition, no one can well question. The Father must wish to draw his children near to him; to raise their minds and hearts to the knowledge of his perfection, and the joy of his love. A direct and special revelation is peculiarly fitted to the accomplishment of this object. It is expressive of a nearness of feeling, so to speak, a tenderness of interest, which the fixed order of nature cannot be made to suggest. This direct and familiar speech of the Divine Being, seems to lessen the distance between him and us. We get close to his side as it were. We hear his voice, and feel his hand laid softly upon the head in benediction. We look up into his face, and see the Father there; and the heart is filled with a child-like confidence, and is glad with a grateful love.

12. This nearness of feeling toward God, this thankful affection, nature alone could not have produced. Placed here upon this earth in the beginning, solitary and alone in the midst of a boundless universe, without one thread of connection with the past or future, without one word of explanation as to how he came here, or for what, or whither he is going; in vain would man have looked to the unvarying operations of the natural world for an answer to the thousand bewildering and painful questions springing up in the dark depths of his soul. And even if after protracted and sorrowfully anxious inquiry and explanation, he had found traces of a Creator, and begun to solve the problem of his own presence on the earth, would

he not, instead of feeling gratitude toward him, have accused him for his long neglect and silence? for leaving him alone with the awful mystery of his own being?

13. But now with a revelation telling him why he is here, and whither he goes—with the familiar voice of his Father lingering in his ear, with words of instruction and encouragement, how is his heart quickened with grateful emotions, and the Parent and the child drawn together in mutual affection. So is this object of revelation gained, and the reasonableness and propriety of it illustrated and justified.

14. It is true that these primitive instructions, these early revelations of divine truth, were, in the course of time, widely departed from, and mostly forgotten. But this, instead of being an argument against the utility of a special revelation, is only an additional argument for the probability of a new one. The infant, or young child, always meets with falls before it learns to walk without help. The parent knows this; but knows also that its experience will be useful, and that each fall will be a lesson and a warning. It does not, therefore, abandon the little one when it falls; but stays by it, lifts it up, and places it on its feet again for a new trial, satisfied that by and by it will be able to go alone. So with the heavenly Parent of man. When his children wandered from the pleasant ways of truth and duty, into the dark and dismal paths of sin and wrong, of degradation and misery, he would not desert them, if he had for them a parent's affection, and leave them to the desolations of their wretched condition. Being a father, he would feel for them a father's compassion, a Father's love; and he would speak to them again, and open for them anew the way of life and peace, knowing that the discipline of the past would help to instruct the mind and heart, and develope the character for higher attainments.

15. In the words of the amiable Channing, "virtue is the supreme good, the supreme beauty, the divinest of God's gifts, the healthy and harmonious unfolding of the soul, and the germ of immortality. It is worth every sacrifice, and has power to transmute sacrifices and sufferings into crowns of glory and rejoicing. Sin, vice is an evil of its own kind, and not to be confounded with any other. Who does not feel the broad distinction between misfortune and crime, between disease of body and turpitude of soul. Sin, vice is war with the highest power in our own breasts, and in the universe. It makes a man odious to himself, and arms against him the principle of rectitude in God and in all pure beings. It poisons or dries up the fountains of enjoyment, and adds unspeakable weight to the necessary pains of life. It is not a foreign evil, but a blight and curse in the very center of our being. Its natural associates are fear, shame, and self-torture; and whilst it robs the present of consolation, it leaves the future without hope. Now I say, that in this peculiar ruin wrought by moral evil, and in this peculiar worth of moral goodness, we see reasons for special interpositions of God in behalf of virtue, in resistance of sin. It becomes the infinite Father to manifest peculiar interest in the moral condition and wants of his creatures. Their great and continued corruption is an occasion for peculiar methods of relief; and a revelation given to restore them, and carry them forward to perfection, has an end which justifies, if it does not demand, this signal expression of parental love."\*

16. There is one other consideration, which seems an argument of great strength for the probability of a revelation. We are mortal. Death is busy continually around us and among us. It is a question of infinite moment,

\* Works, Vol. iii, 336. The whole argument of Channing is alike strong and beautiful, and deserving serious attention.



and one that thrills every soul with intense feeling, "Shall we live again? Is death a final conqueror, or rather destroyer, or is there something beyond death and the grave, better for us than anything the present world affords? Is there anything to hope for when this life is swallowed up of death?" These questions rise up within us all, at times, with overmastering power, and clamor with loud and terrifying voice for an answer. The loved, and beautiful, and good, fall and perish at our feet. The cords of tenderness and gentle affection are slowly torn away with long suffering, or snapt suddenly with a quick and indescribable agony. And ah, with what earnest and intense longing the heart pleads for knowledge of the dear dead. How is the soul swept to its inmost fibres, with questions of the far off invisible land of the departed. How it yearns and prays for some tidings of them; one word only that shall assure us that they live, and that we shall meet again. It is idle to philosophise in such cases, and talk bravely, and with indifferent tone. Whatever the outward look at such times, human nature is always true to itself in the awful presence of death. The agonizing questions that spring up from the silent depths of being, rush over us with an irresistible force, bearing away all our pride, and philosophy, and boasted courage, like feathers on the bosom of the torrent. No living man, whose circle of affection has been invaded by death, or who has himself approached near to the portals of the grave, but has felt all this, asked all these questions, and more.

17. Now I say, that without a revelation these questions cannot be answered. Without God has spoken to us, and told us that we shall live again, the impenetrable night of doubt and uncertainty settles over the borders of death and the grave, and shuts out utterly the land that lies beyond. We have no assurance of an hereafter; no promise that we shall live again, or find again the dear

departed, the objects of our love. We have no confident hope that the thoughts and aspirations after higher and better, that rise up within us, will ever be answered;—that the holy desires which lift above the present life—the almost infinite capacities that fill the soul itself with wonder, and a yearning unutterable for more and more—that these will ever be gratified, or find a fitting sphere of development and action. Now, with all these deep affections and far-reaching aspirations and desires; with all these noble faculties and powers, with this consciousness of a capacity for endless progress in knowledge and happiness and glory, to stand face to face with death, either as he comes to us or our loved ones, and to feel that it is, or may be, the end, that it crushes all down into hopeless, remediless ruin and nothingness—oh, it is frightful! dreadful beyond all words! And in spite of ourselves the soul rises up with a sense of deep wrong and injury, to accuse the God who leaves us in this awful silence and solitude of such a starless night! who, knowing all things, would not speak to us one word of assurance and comfort!

18. In the eloquent appeal of Dewey, I would urge this consideration: “My friends, I bring home the case to myself, and to you. I know what it is to doubt, and I say that no man should judge of the effect of that doubt, till he knows by experience what it is; till, crushed by its weight, he has laid himself down to his nightly rest, too miserable and desperate to care whether he ever raised his head from that pillow of repose and oblivion; till every morning has waked him to sadness and despondency, darker than the gloomiest night that ever clouded the path of earthly sorrow. It is not calamity, it is not worldly disappointment, it is not affliction, it is not grief, that I speak of; nor is it any of these that gives the greatest intensity to this doubt; it is a development of our own nature; it is the soul’s own struggles with the mighty

powers with which it is made to grapple; it is the longed for, and almost felt immortality, struck from our grasp; the light gone out; the heaven of our hope all overshadowed and dark. Yes, it is the consciousness of infinite desires and capacities, all blighted and broken down; it is the aspiring which suns and stars cannot bound, all shrunk and buried in a coffin and a grave. In short, it is the proper and legitimate state of mind, following the premises of the case to their just result; and not that worldly condition of the mind, which is no more fit to judge of this subject, than childhood is to judge of the interests of an empire. And now I say, is it hard to believe that God would interpose for humanity, so circumstanced? Is it incredible that he should send a voice into that deep and dark struggle for spiritual life and hope?" \*

19. Truly, if God has not done this, if he had not shed some rays of light into this night of darkness and doubt, if he has not spoken some word of encouragement and comfort, then indeed it would seem, as this writer says, that "Humanity is too hard a lot;" especially humanity in its highest cultivated estate, when it has learned to think and inquire, and has caught glimpses of the infinite splendor that would flow in upon the path of endless life and progress! No other creature is left so utterly, so sorrowfully hopeless. The cry of the young ravens is heard, the buzzing of the insect is answered, the creeping things of the earth are cared for in all their wants, and to the beasts of the field and the forest, he giveth their meat in due season. "But the call that comes up from the deep and dark conflict of the overshadowed soul, dies upon the vacant air; and there is no ear to hear and no eye to pity. Oh! if it were so, what could maintain the human heart, sinking under the burthen of its noblest aspirations?"

\* Works, Vol. iii. 255, 257.

‘The still sad music of humanity,’ sounding on through all time, would lose every soothing tone, and would become a wail, in which the heart of the world would die!’”

20. These then are some of the facts and arguments furnishing what we think is just ground for believing that God would make a revelation to mankind. They are not without weight, even the unbeliever himself will allow, without doubt. They are founded alike in the being of God and of man; and show clearly, that a revelation is not only not opposed to what we might expect of God, but precisely what we have every reason to look for. They show that it is not only not contrary to nature, but in entire harmony with its arrangements in other departments; and, so to put the case, that *no* revelation, and not *a* revelation, would be a departure from, or violation of the ordinary course of nature.

21. I know that attempts have been made to lessen the force of these arguments in support of the probability and reasonableness of a revelation, by assuming that the “light of nature,” so called, is sufficient to answer all these questions; sufficient to answer all the wants of man, and show him the path of duty and of happiness. It would be a proper answer to this assertion to say, that it is contradicted by the universal witness of mankind; and by the very instincts, as well as the most cultivated faculties of human nature; as shown in the facts and experience already set forth. Still, we are willing to meet this assumption on its own ground; and, by an appeal to the stubborn facts of history, as it relates to philosophy and religion, to mental and moral science, to demonstrate how much faith is to be had in the “light of nature” as a guide in what pertains to the highest good of man. This we shall do in the next section.

## SECTION II.

### THE LIGHT OF NATURE NOT ADEQUATE TO THE WANTS OF MAN.

1. It was observed, when speaking of the "laws of nature," that this was an expression to which most who used it attach no distinct or definite meaning. The same remark is doubtless applicable to another familiar phrase, "the light of nature." Many pleasant things have been said, and many glowing pictures sketched by the pencil of poetic fancy, to convince the world of the superior excellency of nature's teachings, and of their perfect adaptation to all the moral and intellectual wants of man. But, alas for the imagination; as the gilded domes of London, when exposed to the fog and smoke of her atmosphere, soon lose their brilliancy, so these dazzling representations of the light of nature, when exposed to the damp and murky atmosphere of stubborn facts, quickly part with their theoretic beauty. It is not necessary that we enter into any labored arguments to show the fallacy of this doctrine in the abstract, to prove that the light of nature is not sufficient to teach man the way of duty, and instruct him in those things, the knowledge of which is requisite to his happiness—it is not necessary to do this by speculative reasoning: we have only to appeal to the facts of the case, and we shall have an answer which, in the view of any candid mind, will set the question at rest.

2. In the examination of the particulars which give ev-

idence of the utter insufficiency of the light of nature for the guidance of man, we shall be brief, because the subject matter of the next chapter will also have a bearing upon this point.

3. [1.] We will first glance at the nations or tribes who have never been brought within the influence of Revelation, but are to this day under the sole direction of the light of nature. Take the Aborigines of our own land—what had this light done for them previous to the arrival of our forefathers? how much of knowledge had they derived from it? and how far had they been elevated, and their condition improved by its teachings? and how did its fostering influences affect the relative virtues, as justice, mercy, forbearance, forgiveness, &c.? Let their actions answer; their constant wars, their hatred of enemies, their horrid cruelty to captives, their love of revenge, and the murder of the innocent for the crime of the guilty. And even at this hour, what better can be said of them? They are yet ignorant of God, of his character and government. They speak of the “Great Spirit,” it is true; but their language and conduct with respect to him, show how gross are their conceptions of what belongs to Deity.\* Their knowledge of right and wrong is set forth in facts such as follow: “Before our intercourse with them, a universal custom existed with them of destroying most of their female children in infancy. Their excuse was, that they were quite as much trouble to rear, and consumed just as much food as a male child; yet, when grown up, they were not fit to go to war as the boys were.”† Stewart says of the Sandwich Isles, that “two-thirds of the infants born

\* Some of them worship the sun and fire as a deity. *American Antiquities*, p. 209.

† *Nar. New Zealand*, p. 244.

perish by the hands of their own parents ;”\* and Ellis informs us that “they sometimes strangle them, but more frequently bury them alive.” The same is also true of the Society Islands, or was previous to the introduction of Christianity. The Mexicans offered up human victims, and to a shocking extent, insomuch that they are said to have sacrificed at least ten thousand victims annually. Such was the light of nature to these people.†

4. If we go to other countries, we shall find a like ignorance of God, his government, and human duty. The state of China with regard to religious knowledge, is doubtless familiar to every one ;‡ as is that also of India, where idols without number are set up for worship,§ and the most abominable and horrid ceremonies performed in connection therewith. Obscenity and blood mark every step of their superstitions, and no man who has a heart to feel, can contemplate the picture without shuddering. Exaggeration is altogether out of the question ; the reality of cruelty and

\* Page 251, cited by Turner.

† “The most of the images worshiped are said to be evil spirits, and for which they give this single reason,—that the good spirits will not injure them, and the evil, or bad ones by this attention or devotion, may be prevented from doing so.” As to their morals, it is added—“there is not a virtue held sacred among them, nor a vice they do not practice.” Add to this the account of *Jos* and the *sacred hogs*, and we have the light of nature for China.” Reynold’s *Voyage of the Potomac*, p. 348.

‡ Horne says that there are no less than *three hundred and thirty millions* of deities ! This is perhaps a round number ; but if we say only one hundred million, it will probably satisfy the reader that nature has not been a very faithful teacher to these people.

§ See *Ancient Mexico*, vol. i. 220–227, by Soidon. Also, Robertson’s *America* ; and specially, Prescott’s *Conquest of Mexico*, Preliminary view. For Pacific Islands, see U. S. *Exploring Expedition*, particularly the Feejee Group.

licentiousness is worse than any description can make it.\* Yet these people have had the benefit of the light of nature. How much are they improved by its teachings?

5. If we turn an eye to other portions of the earth, we shall find the same witness. Persia, Africa, Summatra, and many other places, show how little dependence is to be put in the revelations of nature. The Persians believed in two gods, Ormaze, the author of good, formed out of light, and Ahrimanes, the author of evil, formed out of darkness. They supposed Ormaze made six gods as good as himself, and Ahrimanes opposed to them six wicked ones. Afterwards he made twenty-four other gods, and shut them up in an egg; but Ahrimanes made twenty-four evil ones who cracked the egg, and thus good and evil became mixed. "In Tartary, the Phillippine Isles, and some parts of Africa, the objects of worship are the sun, moon, and stars, the four elements, and serpents; at Tonquin, the four quarters of the earth; in Guinea, birds, fishes, and even mountains. The Rejangs, as they

\* The following notices of Juggernaut will show this :—"We know that we are approaching Juggernaut, though fifty miles distant, by the human bones which we have seen for some days strown by the way." "The walls, gates, and tower of the temple, are covered with indecent emblems in durable sculpture, freshly painted for the occasion, and made the object of sensual gaze by both sexes." A pilgrim has laid himself down on his face, and is crushed to death by the wheels of the tower." "Yesterday a woman devoted herself to the idol." The sand-plains by the sea are whitened with the bones of pilgrims; and the place called the English Golgotha is where the dead bodies are thrown, and dogs and vultures are constantly seen there." Buchanan's Researches, pp. 101-113. Boston, 1811. This should be universally read. For a more terrible evidence still, if possible, see "The Thregs, or Phansigars of India; comprising a History of that extraordinary Fraternity of Assassins." 2 vols. Phil. 1839.



are called, of Summatra, believe that tigers are endowed with the spirits of departed men ; and so strong is this superstition that they will not put one of these animals to death except in actual self-defence. Indeed, the very name of tiger inspires them with awe, and they have a belief among them, that in some remote and hitherto unfrequented portion of the island, these animals have a village, a court, and live in huts thatched with womens' hair."\* They also believe that trees are inhabited by spirits. Dahomey, in the western part of Africa, affords proof of the morality of the light of nature. The sovereign is a finished despot ; his people view him as a superior being ; the greatest amongst them consider it a privilege to prostrate themselves on their faces before him ; all the unmarried females of the kingdom are his property and at his disposal ; he selects the most beautiful for himself and sells the rest ; at the great national festival he moistens the graves of his ancestors with the blood of human victims ; and when he would send them a letter, he gives it to a slave, and orders his head cut off, that when dead he may go and deliver it.† The floor of his apartment is formed of human skulls, and his palaces and temples are decorated with the skulls and bones of slaughtered enemies."‡ Among the Haraporas of the Eastern Isles, no person is permitted to marry until he can show the skull of a man whom he has killed. In the interior of Borneo, and the neighboring isles, they not only kill and eat their criminals and prisoners, but even their relatives, regarding it as a pious ceremony. Thus when a man becomes aged and infirm, those who are nearest and dearest

\* Reynold's Journal of the Potomac's Voyage, p. 171.

† See also Herodotus, Hist. B. iv. c. 94.

‡ Discoveries in Africa, p. 197.

to him deprive him of life, and devour his remains in a solemn banquet.\*

6. Such are the facts with regard to the sufficiency of the light of nature, in teaching man concerning the true God, and his duties to his fellow-man. These people have all been under the direction of the light of nature, so far as it had come to them; they never had been influenced by revelation or the Christian religion, and we see in their case how capable man is to guide himself without it; we see that, notwithstanding the excellency of nature's teachings, they have been, and are, addicted to the most superstitious, cruel, and abominable rites that it is possible to imagine. But perhaps it will be said that it is unfair to make these a criterion, as they are among the most ignorant and degraded of the human race. Well, suppose they are; if the light of nature be sufficient for their guidance and instruction in morals, why are they so degraded and ignorant? The very objection to these examples destroys the theory. However, we are not disposed to press this, but are willing to take more favorable specimens, and if the result be not equally horrible, it will be equally decisive.

7. [2.] Take the philosophers of old—the wise men of ancient days. The Egyptians, from whom the world received the rudiments of philosophy, and indeed of all knowledge independent of revelation, were considered the wisest and most advanced people on earth, yet worshiped the Ibis, the Ichneumon, the Crocodile, and a thousand other like deities.† It may be affirmed that they

\* Buchanan's Researches, pp. 144–147. See also Irving's Columbus Abridged, p. 147. Beloe's Herodotus, B. iv. c. 20. Leland on Revelation, vol. ii. p. 199, *Note*.

† “The priests of Egypt, Persia, India, etc. pretended to bind the gods to their idols, and make them descend from heaven at pleasure; they threaten the sun and moon to reveal the secret mys-

had more exalted notions of religious things; but, grant that they did, they were not benefitted by them, for they continued notwithstanding to worship these animals. And if the philosophers of Greece and Rome advanced a step beyond these, it was with many but a step. Xenocrates believed that the air was filled with powerful evil spirits, who, being of morose and savage tempers, took pleasure in witnessing scourgings, lamentations, fastings, &c., and having been gratified with such exhibitions, would do no farther mischief. The Areopagus of Athens, the most celebrated court of ancient times, banished Stilpo for denying that the statue of Minerva was a real God. Behold the wisdom of these renowned judges! Cicero makes the stoic Balbus affirm that the Deity by his nature partakes of everything; that he is Cereus on earth, Neptune in the sea, and is called by other names in other places; and hence that all these gods should be worshiped.\* “The majority of philosophers, says Porphyry, acknowledge no other gods, of all those recognised by the Egyptians, than such as are commonly called planets and constellations. They believe that the acts of our will, and the motions of our bodies, depend upon those of the stars to which they are subjected. Plutarch tells us, that Anaximander affirmed the stars to be the eternal gods; Democritus, that Deity was a fiery storm, the soul of the world; Epicurus, that all the gods had human forms; and Diagoras, Theodorus, and Euthemerus, that there were no gods at all. Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, the stoic school, and even the polished Cicero, believed in inferior divinities, paid worship to

teries, to shake the heavens,” &c. Euseb. *Prepar. Evang.*, cited by Volney. *Ruins*, p. 126.

\* *De nat. deorum*, lib. ii. c. 28, cited by Montesquieu. *Pol. des Rom. dans la Ret.* This is doubtless the meaning of Virgil also, *Georg.* iv., 221, 222. *Æneid*, vi. 726. *Ecl.* v. 60, *Jovis omnia plena*.

some of them, and taught and practiced in accordance with the wild superstitions of their country. Zeno thought the sky was the Supreme Deity (*Summus Deus mente præditus*;) Anaxemenes, that the air was a Deity; Xenocrates, of whom we have before spoken, that there were eight gods; five in the moving planets, one composed of all the fixed stars, which are like his limbs, another the sun, and the eighth the moon.\* Varro divided the Gods into three departments; those invented by the poets, those established by the philosophers, and those set up by the magistrates; and he takes great credit to himself that he had taught his countrymen of all the gods they should serve, and the manner in which each was to be worshiped, so that they might know whom to address at any given time, and how.† It is probable, however, that Varro had no faith himself in these gods, which but proves his servile hypocrisy and dishonesty. A Philosopher of the Eclectic school affirms, that “the earth is an animal, endued with a divine soul, and a divine body, containing an immaterial intellect, and a divine soul energizing this intellect—so that the earth is a divine animal, full of intellectual and animastic essences.”‡

8. The preceding is sufficient to show how far these learned and admired philosophers were benefitted by the light of nature. They were the very oracles of the ancient world, the literary wonders of Greece and Rome, and yet how absurd and puerile their notions of sacred things, and how far their loftiest conceptions fell short of the being, character, and perfections of the true God. Nevertheless, these were the best instructions they could gather, with all their labor, from the teachings of nature.

\* Turner, vol. ii., p. 56, Note.

† Priestly's Institutes, Part II. c. i. § ii.

‡ Turner, vol. ii., p. 107, Note.

And so wild, contradictory, and uncertain, were they, that Cicero advised to remain in doubt, or at least appeared to think it best; while the great Socrates candidly confessed that he despaired of finding truth, unless a divine instructor should be sent to mankind, whom he seemed indeed to expect. Of the morals of these philosophers, as resulting from the light of nature, we shall speak in the next chapter, to which this particular more properly belongs.

9. [3.] We are aware that the unbelievers of the present day affirm, that these errors of the ancients are owing, not to the insufficiency of the light of nature, but to their non-improvement or improper application of it. To this we say, they improved it as far, and as correctly, as it enabled them to see. But this stricture upon such as Socrates, Plato, Cicero, &c., comes with an ill grace from the modest men of whom we speak. However, we are perfectly willing to follow them even to the end, and shall therefore notice some of the expositions of the light of nature, by the wisdom of modern scepticism.

10. Hobbes, who wrote about the middle of the seventeenth century, says that inspiration is a supernatural gift, yet that pretence to it is madness—that worship is due to God, yet all religion is nonsense—that a sovereign is not bound by any obligation of truth or justice; and that every one has a lawful right to all things, and may get them if he can—that the civil law is the only rule of right and wrong, of good and evil, just and unjust, honest and dishonest; and that antecedent to such laws, every action is in its own nature indifferent; that there is nothing good or evil in itself; that all things are measured by what every man judges fit, where there is no civil government, and by the laws of society where there is. Tindal says that the religion of nature is plain even to the most ignorant, and God could not make it more plain by revelation; but at the same time declares that almost all mankind have

had unworthy notions of God, and wrong apprehensions of natural religion, having grossly mistaken it, and imbibed a superstition worse than Atheism. Chubb asserts that God will deal with men according to their works; and yet will not judge them for impiety or ingratitude to him, nor for unkindness and injustice to each other, and has no concern with the good or evil done by man—that all religions are alike, and that it is no matter what religion a man embraces. Lord Bolingbroke says, power and wisdom are the only attributes of God, yet ascribes every other perfection to him—that God does not concern himself with human affairs at all—that divines are to be censured for saying that he made men to be happy, yet asserts himself that God made them to be happy—that the religion of nature is clear to all mankind, and yet that the greatest part of mankind are ignorant of it—that self-love is the great law of nature, and yet that universal benevolence is the great law of nature—that there is no conscience in man, except artificially—and that it is more natural to believe in many gods, than to believe in one. As to morality, he affirms, that ambition, avarice, sensuality, &c., may be lawfully gratified, if *safely*—that man is only a superior animal—that the chief end of man is to gratify the appetites and inclinations of the flesh—that polygamy is the religion of nature—that adultery is no violation of it, and that there is no wrong except in the most brutal lewdness. The celebrated, the shrewd, the philosophical Hume asserts that there is no reason to believe that the universe had a cause; and yet that it is universally allowed, that nothing exists without a cause—that there are no sound arguments in proof of a God, and yet that it would be unreasonable to believe God wise and good—that what we call perfections in God may be defects; that is to say, that justice, goodness, truth, &c., may be divine defects. In his private correspondence he affirms, that self-denial

and humility are not virtues, but are absolutely injurious—that pride, self-esteem, ingenuity, &c., are virtues, that adultery must be practiced, if men would gain all the advantages of life, and if generally practiced would in time cease to be scandalous, and if secretly and frequently practiced, would soon be thought no crime! Voltaire and Helvetius advocated the unrestrained indulgence of sensual appetites, and Helvetius affirms that it is impolitic to regard adultery as a vice, and moreover that it is *useful*; while Voltaire practiced it to a shameless and beastly extent, as his private life fully shows. The hypocrisy, treachery, cruelty, and profligacy of this last are too foul to be repeated.\*

11. Such then are the precepts, doctrines, and morals of these oracles of modern infidelity, these worshipers of Reason; and we see in the picture how far the light of nature has served to guide them in the path of truth, of morality, and right. No excuse can be offered for them: they were not ignorant, but professed themselves philosophers: they had the experience of the past, and all the concentrated light of the present; and yet how widely, how fearfully have they erred, and that upon points of the utmost importance to the interests and happiness of man, and to the virtue and well-being of society! The principles and precepts mentioned are of such a character as to startle even the boldest minds, and we cannot but feel that if this be the light of nature, it is surely not the light of truth or duty.

12. [4.] If now we descend a step lower to the present day, and look to those who, basking in the sunshine of Christian truth, still refuse to acknowledge their indebted-

\* For the materials of this paragraph, we are indebted to "Leland's View of Deistical writers," London, 1757. Also to Horne, who copied from him, and to Priestly's Institutes, Part II.

ness to it, we may have the same doctrine or principle, in substance, though in a different guise. The fashion now is, to accept the Christian doctrines and ethics mostly, to eulogize the character of Christ, his revelations of truth and duty; but to claim at the same time that they are only the necessary product of natural religion, the results at which unassisted reason could arrive without any special help of God. The superiority of Jesus, and his discovery or knowledge of these truths, arose from his superior natural endowments, his perfect obedience to the physical and spiritual laws, and the consequent perfect development of his physical and spiritual faculties, and his entire harmony with nature.

13. This is supposed to be a somewhat new method of presenting the question; and in this way the doctrine of the sufficiency of "the light of nature," is dignified and made respectable under the name of "rationalism," "rational Christianity," &c.\* And though the integrity of

\* I would not wish to be unjust or uncharitable in judging these men. They are perhaps sincere, and justify their use of the word "Christian" on the ground that they believe all that is essential to Christianity. But I think the following is fairly put, nevertheless: "They would justify this use on the ground that they believe in the morality of the precepts which Christ taught. But we would put to their consciences to answer, whether they believe more of Christ and Christianity than did many of that class of infidel philosophers that flourished in the two last centuries. We ask them to compare notes with Lord Herbert, who held that Christianity was the best religion, and consonant with the universal religion of nature—with Hobbes, who, in his sense of the term, was willing to say that the Scriptures are the voice of God—with Shaftsbury, who said that those are to be censured who represent the gospel as a fraud, yea, who wrote a preface to Dr. Whitcot's sermons, and in it expressed the hope that they would induce the enemies of Christianity to prize it more—with Collins, who speaks respectfully of Christianity, while he impugns it—with Woolston, who said that infidelity had no place in his heart, and that he wrote for the honor



the New Testament, the authority of Christ, his miracles and claims as a special messenger of God, are all denied, these philosophers conclude on the whole, with much condescension, to patronise Christianity as a very useful affair, properly managed.

14. But suppose we meet these assertions with a simple denial, and call for the proofs. They surely come with an ill grace from those who are so fond of demanding proof of others. How do they know that Christ had so perfect a spiritual and physical organization, independent of the direct purpose and agency of God? How do they know anything about his superior natural endowments? And by what process of investigation and experiment do they demonstrate a necessary connection between these, if granted, and the knowledge of God, and man, and the immortal life, which Christ possessed? Can it be shown that the last is the logical and certain consequence of the first? And how do they know that the truths of Christianity, its doctrines and morals, would, or could have been reached by the light of nature, or evolved by the power of unassisted human reason! Must we take the assertion without any show of satisfactory evidence? But what makes the assertion appear more absurd and groundless, is, that the facts in this case, as in all the former, the facts of thousands of years are against it, and thoroughly de-

of Jesus and in defence of Christianity—with Tindall, who called Christianity a most holy religion—with Chubb, who assumed the garb of Christianity, and expressed a hope of sharing a Christian heaven with his friends—with Bolingbroke, who called Christianity a re-publication of the religion of nature, and who declared that he intended to seek it in the spirit in which Christ taught it—with Gibbon, who abundantly complimented Christianity—with Rousseau who wound up a most sublime description of the life of Christ with the assertion that Jesus Christ died like a God."—*Puritan*.

structive of the position. And facts are the only reliable authority in this inquiry.

15. It seems very easy, standing in the full blaze of Christian light, to say this or that truth is plain enough, and demonstrable by aid of reason and nature. But if Christianity had never been, if God had never spoken through Jesus, I doubt if these men would have risen up *very* much above Socrates, Plato and Cicero, or have spoken more confidently than they! The very strength they possess, the very clearness of vision with which they look into the depths of nature, and discover her secrets, and interpret her teachings—this very power they owe to Christianity. Of course there is agreement between Natural and Revealed Religion, for God is the author of both. The difference is not altogether in the kind of truths, but in the extent also. Revelation helps us to understand Nature; and where Nature stops wearied and bewildered, unable to lead us any farther or higher, Revelation takes us by the hand, and brings us into the presence of God and the angels.

16. Strange and ungrateful, then, is the conduct of those who, instructed by Christianity, and enlightened by it as to the meaning and language of Nature, do then, being so instructed and enlightened, declare that they owe nothing to their teacher, that they were abundantly able to accomplish it all themselves. Such as these appear to us as “rational” as one who, learning to read French or German, by the help of a master and a dictionary, should, having learned, talk largely of the folly of being helped, declare there was no need of teachers or dictionary; and adduce as proof that he could now read the language without either! Ah, yes; doubtless he can read now without either; but suppose there never had been teacher or dictionary, what would he have done then? How much would he know of the language? The question is not whether he

can read *now* without master or lexicon ; but whether if, when he began, there had been neither of these, he would ever have learned to read at all ! This is the true point of comparison and contrast.

17. So in the case in review,—it is not how far Reason may guide us *now* ; it is not how Nature appears to *us* ; but how far reason was a guide, and how nature appeared to those who lived before Christ taught, and beyond the light of Revelation. The facts already adduced have shown this very clearly. Or if you would have a more palpable contrast of the present day, and so complete the inquiry ; take a native of New Holland, a Fejee islander, or an Esquimaux, and tell us what nature and reason have done for them !\*

18. To us, as said, standing in the full light of the gospel Revelation, nature becomes transparent. We look into her heart, and see the beatings of its pulse, and trace the circulation, and detect the secret of her life. Her teachings become intelligible, beautiful and affecting. She puts on a splendor glorious as the dwelling place of God ! But without Christianity, her glory is dimmed. Nay, the shadows of impenetrable night gather upon her face. We speak—but she is dumb. We pray, but no answer comes to us. We ask with agonizing earnestness for tidings of the beloved dead—she heeds us not—she is silent as the grave which has hidden them from our sight !†

19. So much, then, for the assertion so often repeated of late, that Reason and natural religion are sufficient without a Revelation ; and that Christ only anticipated the race a little in his doctrines of God, of man, and human

\* The Narrative of the U. S. Exploring Expedition will furnish abundant materials for such an inquiry. It would be a profitable one.

† See this discussion more fully in Chap. ix.

destiny; or, in other words, that the race would, by and by, have grown up by natural development to the knowledge of these truths. Let those who boast of their present power, and light, and discoveries in spiritual things, unravel the beautiful web of which they are so proud, and trace back, if possible, to Nature and Reason, and to Revelation each separate thread, and note down how many belong to the first and how many to the last. And then let them draw out all that are woven in by Revelation, and see what kind of a web will be left. I venture to say it will not sufficiently cover the nakedness of their pretensions, to keep back the blush from their cheeks.

20. We have now finished our examination on this head; and we think it has been shown that the "light of nature," or unassisted reason, is not sufficient to meet the intellectual, moral and religious wants of man. Here then is the conclusion of the matter as far as we have proceeded. 1st. There is a God. 2d. From the character of God, from the ignorance of man, and the insufficiency of the light of nature as a guide, a revelation is both reasonable and probable. In the next chapter we shall attempt to show the necessity of the Christian, or a similar revelation, at the time this professes to have been made, by a consideration of the then existing state of the moral and religious world.

## CHAPTER IV.

NECESSITY OF A REVELATION PROVED FROM THE RELIGIOUS AND MORAL STATE OF THE HEATHEN WORLD PREVIOUS TO THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY. IS THAT NECESSITY ANSWERED BY CHRISTIANITY?

### SECTION I.

#### RELIGIOUS OPINIONS.

1. The conclusion at which we arrived in the preceding chapter with regard to a revelation, was, that it was reasonable and probable ; which conclusion was drawn from an examination of facts. In the present chapter we shall attempt, pursuing the same course, to demonstrate the *necessity* of a revelation. In doing this, we shall call up in review the religious opinions and moral practices of the heathen world prior to Christ's appearance upon earth. It will be our object to show, that at that time its condition in these respects was such as to call loudly, so to speak, for a reform ; to show that men universally, the learned and unlearned, the wise man and the fool, the philosopher and the peasant, were all reduced to a common level, had all become so bewildered, and blinded, and corrupted, that they were incapable of discovering truth, or of defining the great guiding principles of human duty. In connec-

tion with this we shall endeavor to make it appear that the Christian religion was perfectly adapted to their condition, perfectly fitted to reform their errors of belief and practice, and to give them correct conceptions of those things, the knowledge of which was necessary to their happiness and to the welfare of society. Let it not, however, be inferred from this that we take it for granted Christianity is of God. This is not the intention. At the present stage of our inquiry, we look upon it simply as a religion professing to be suited to the then existing circumstances of mankind, and calculated to promote their highest interests; and by this rule we are disposed to test it. If it meets the test, and we discover in its principles and precepts this entire fitness and adaptation to the condition and wants of the world, we shall have reason, not perhaps to believe it true, but certainly to think favorably of it—yea, more, we shall have a strong presumptive proof of its divine origin.

2. In the examination of this subject, we shall, for the sake of convenience and perspicuity, take it up by separate particulars or articles; giving first the heathen opinions or practices, and following these with the principles proffered by Christianity as corrective substitutes.

#### 1. OPINIONS RESPECTING GOD.

1. *Heathenism.* This particular has been noticed somewhat at length in the preceding chapter, so far as the views of the philosophers were concerned; and we shall therefore present in this place the views or belief of the great body of the people. In every respect they entertained the grossest and most inconsistent notions of Deity, or rather of deities, for they knew nothing of the one God, but believed in and worshiped gods innumerable, and of all characters and grades, from the thundering Jove to the

petty spirit presiding over a grove or pond.\* To these they raised statues, altars, and temples, and to each and every one a peculiar and distinct service was allotted, consisting of rites and ceremonies the most absurd, and in many cases the most revolting and disgusting. At one time they worshiped this deity, at another, that; to-day they sought the protection of one god, to-morrow swore

\* The following notice of the ancient heathen deities, designed to show how great was the need of a reformation in this respect, may not be unacceptable to the reader. *Celestial gods.* Jupiter, or Jupiters, for Varro reckons 300 of them—Apollo, Sol or the Sun, Mercury, Bacchus, Mars. *Celestial goddesses.* Juno, Minerva, Venus, Latona, Aurora. *Terrestrial gods.* Saturn, Janus, Vulcan, Eolus, Mórmut. *Terrestrial goddesses.* Vesta, Cybele, Ceres, The Muses, of whom there were nine, Themis, Astræa, Nemésis. *Rural deities.* Pan, Silvanus, Silenus, Priapus, Terminus, the Satyrs and Fauns. *Rural goddesses.* Diana, Pales, Flora, Feronia, Pomona, the Nymphs, Rusina, Collina, Nallonia, Hippona, Bubona, Seia, Runcina, Proserpine, Volusia, Patelina, Lactucina, Matura, Hostilina, Tutelina, Mellona. *Agricultural gods.* Occator, Sator, Robigus, Stercutus, Nodosus. To show the folly and degradation of the people, we will mention some particulars connected with agriculture. They worshiped Stercutus, when they manured the ground; Sator, when they sowed; Occator, when they harrowed; Rucina, when they weeded. They worshiped Seia that she would take care of the seed in the ground; Proserpine, when it came out of the earth; Robigus, that he would avert blasting; Nodotus, that he would take care of the joints of the stalk; Flora, that she would take care of the blossom; Lactucina, of the ear in milk; Matura, of the ear in maturity; Hortilina, that the ears might grow even; Tutelina, when it was reaped; and Pilumnus, when it was made into bread. This will suffice to show their blindness, yet this is not all; they had separate deities who guarded the horses, oven, stables, &c. *Sea deities.* Neptune, Triton, Oceanus, Nereus, Palamon, Proteus, Glaucus, &c. *Infernal deities.* Pluto, Proserpine; three Fates—Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos; three Furies—Alecto, Tisiphone, and Megæra; and a host of monsters. They also erected altars and offered sacrifices to the various winds, to rivers, groves, fountains, &c. Besides these now mentioned, there are Penates, or household gods,

fideliſy to another, perhaps the enemy of the former; this hour, they brought as an offering, gold and ſilver, the next, a little ſalt and meal; here they paid their devotions with groans, and proſtrations, and ſcourgings, and there with revelling and drunkenneſs. Farther information may be gathered from the preceding note, whence ſome notion may be formed of the countless multitude of their gods.

2. *Chriſtianity.* To do away this error, to remove this hoſt of imaginary gods, Chriſtianity addreſſed to the heathen world ſuch teſtimonies as the following:—  
 “There is ONE GOD.” 1 Tim. ii. 5. “An idol is nothing in the world, and there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords

belonging to every family; gods preſiding over kingdoms, cities and houſes. There were no leſs than *ſixteen* deities worſhiped, or to whom offerings were made, on the occaſion of marriage, beſides thoſe preſiding over women in labor. *Thirteen* preſided over children at their birth and afterward. A deity was aſſigned to every member of the body—the head was ſacred to Jupiter, the breaſt to Neptune, the feet to Mercury, &c. In addition to theſe, they built temples to, and worſhiped, Virtue, Health, Hope, Juſtice, Clemency, Fidelity, Chaſtity, Peace, Science, Art; alſo, Fever, Fear, Pain, Indignation, Shame, Impudence, Calumny, Fraud, Diſcord, Suſpicion, Envy, War, Triumph, Victory, Liberty, Money, Love, Laughter, &c. &c. The Egyptians worſhiped beaſts, birds, fiſhes, reptiles, inſects, herbs, vegetables, &c. Theſe abſurdities ſubjected them to the ſarcasm of Juvenal, who exclaims, alluding to the *enſions* which they worſhiped,

“O ſanctas gentes—

A devout people, whoſe gods grow in their gardens.”

This notice will ſatisfy the reader, we preſume, that the world in this department, at leaſt, needed to be enlightened. More may be ſeen in Tooke’s Pantheon, Adam’s Rom. Ant., and Anthon’s Clasiſical Dictionary. The ſcholar will of courſe conſult original authorities.



many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things." 1 Cor. viii. 4—6. "Keep yourselves from idols." 1 John v. 21. "They be no gods which are made with hands." Acts xix. 26. "The Lord our God is one Lord." "Thou hast said the truth; for there is one God; and there is none other but he." Mark xii. 29, 32. "We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." Acts xvii. 29. "He that believeth there is one God, doeth well." James ii. 19. "There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Eph. iv. 6. Here then we see Christianity correcting the first great error of the pagan world, and teaching them that there is one God, and none other but one.

## II. RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

1. *Heathenism.* In the worship paid their gods, the ancients gave place to all possible folly and extravagance. They erected magnificent temples and altars, and enriched them with the most splendid offerings. Augustus bestowed upon the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, at one time, gold and jewels to the value of six or eight millions of dollars. Their gifts were of various kinds, according to the character of the god, the first fruits of the field, salt, meal, cakes, oil, wine, incense, goats, oxen, &c. If any calamity came upon them, they referred it to the anger of some god; and immediately loaded his altar with presents and sacrifices. If prosperity attended them, it was referred to the favor of the gods, and the same course was pursued—sacrifices were decreed, offerings without number were brought to their temples, statues were raised to them, and every thing done which was thought to be pleasing to them.

2. *Christianity.* In regard to these foolish superstitions, Christianity thus spake to the heathen world:—"We

preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God." Acts xiv. 15. "Ye worship ye know not what." John iv. 22. "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." Acts xvii. 24, 25. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." John iv. 24.—"Offer *spiritual* sacrifices, acceptable to God." 1 Peter ii. 5. "To do good and communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Heb. xiii. 16. "To love the Lord God with all the heart and understanding, and to love thy neighbor as thyself, is more than all offerings and sacrifices." Mark xii. 33. How much purer and nobler such worship as this!

### III. ORIGIN OF THE WORLD.

1. *Heathenism.* Some believed that the world was brought forth of Chaos; some that it was begotten of Night; others, that it came from an egg; that water and matter were from the beginning, and produced it; that condensed air and Chaos united in its formation;\* and some believe it to have been the result of chance,† or a fortuitous concurrence of atoms; and some believed that it was eternal, having existed in its present state without beginning.‡

2. *Christianity.* To these wild and contradictory dreams, Christianity replied—"God made the world, the heavens, the earth, and the sea, and all things that are

\* Turner, ii. 42.

† Juvenal, Sat. xiii.

‡ "If the world is eternal, why have not other poets sung of other events before the Theban or Trojan wars? Why have not the deeds of earlier men been immortalized?" Lucretius, De rerum natura lib. v. 325—330

therein." Acts xiv. 15. xvii. 24. "He that hath built all things is God." Heb. iii. 4. "The Lord in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands." Heb. i. 10. "The Lord God is worthy to receive glory, and honor, and power; for he has created all things, and for his pleasure they are and were created." Rev. iv. 11. Thus did Christianity solve the problem of creation, and give to the unlearned and the philosopher a rational answer to their inquiries, and an answer at once the most simple and sublime.

#### IV. ORIGIN OF THE HUMAN RACE.

1. *Heathenism.* The Arcadians, and some of the Athenians, supposed that men sprang out of the earth, like grasshoppers, and probably connected them in some way with these insects, as they wore an image of one, made of gold or of silver for an ornament.\* The Egyptians believed that men grew out of the mud of the Nile. Anaximander taught that they originated from fishes; being nourished in their bellies, and then spewed out on land. Hence he condemned the eating of fishes, because they were our parents! Some believed that separate parts and limbs of the body grew up from the earth, and one day came together accidentally, and formed a body. Some said that men were originally made of wind and water; others of fire, and others that they fell from the firmament. Some believed that men came out of the earth like swamp plants or vegetables.† Others believed that

\*Turner, Sac. Hist. ii. 86.

† Quum prorepserunt, et seq. Horace, L. i. Sat. iii. How much does this philosophy of Rome excel that of the natives of Hayti, when Columbus first visited them! "They ascribed to a cavern the origin of the human race, believing that large men issued forth

they came from the water, some of them with two wings and two faces, one male and the other female; some had the legs and horns of goats; others were half horse and half men; and others had a human head with the body of a bull.\*

2. *Christianity.* In the place of these absurd vagaries, Christianity brought the following corrections:—"God hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth." Acts xvii. 26. "In him we live and move, and have our being"—"we are his offspring—he giveth to all life and breath." 25, 28. "From the beginning of the creation God made them male and female." Mark x. 6. "God is the Father of all." Eph. iv. 6. "We are his workmanship." ii. 10. Such was the language addressed to the wanderers, communicating to them the assurance that "one God created them," and therefore, that they had "one common Father." Could any thing be better suited to their wants than this?

#### V. A FUTURE STATE.

1. *Heathenism.* That the ancients had some notions of a future existence is admitted; but they were of the

from a great aperture, but the little men from a little cranny." "For some time they wandered about disconsolately without females, until coming near a small lake, they beheld certain animals among the branches of the trees, which proved to be women. On attempting to catch them, they were found to be as slippery as eels, so that it was impossible to hold them, until they employed certain persons whose hands had been rendered rough by a kind of leprosy. These succeeded in securing four of them; and from these slippery females the world was peopled." *Irvings Columbus Abridged*; pp. 146—147. The light of nature!

\*See *Buddæi Hist. Ecclesiastica Vet. Test.* Vol i. 75—81. Hal-lac 1715. Cicero says there is nothing so absurd but that it has found advocates among the philosophers.

wildest and most unreasonable character. The followers of Odin believed it to consist in sensual gratification. The Elysium of the poets, was but a renewal of earthly pleasures; and of these they are sometimes represented as being weary. Homer makes Achilles say, that he would rather be a rustic, work for hire, and live on the meanest food, if he could be on earth. Virgil and Horace give us to understand, that their heroes would gladly exchange their place in Elysium, for the humblest condition on earth. Both represent this heaven as no very desirable place.\* The philosophers had little, if any, faith in a future existence. Socrates, Plato, and Cicero, may be said to have *hoped*, rather than believed in the immortality of the soul. Socrates said just before his death—"I shall die and you will continue to live; but which of us will be in the better state is known only to God. I *hope* I am going to good men, but this I would not confidently assert." Cicero, who argued strongly for this doctrine, says, after all, that it is questionable; and adds, that however desirable it might be, the philosophers who treated of it, had rather promised than proved it. Such was the uncertain and gloomy state of the heathen world with regard to this interesting question.

2. *Christianity.* To dissipate this darkness which brooded over the hopes and happiness of mankind, Christianity brought them the certainty of a future existence, demonstrated by the actual resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It declared to them that he had "risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept;" and that "he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus." 1 Cor. xv. 2. Cor. iv. "For he hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible,

\*Æneid, lib. vi. Car. lib. iv. Ode 6. Gould's edit.

undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." 1 Peter i. 3. "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. v. 1. "For this mortal must put on immortality, and this corruption must put on incorruption; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." 1 Cor. xv. In the resurrection they die no more, "for they are equal unto the angels, and are children of God, being children of the Resurrection." Matt. xxii. Luke xx. Such is the cheering language which Christianity addressed to the heathen world, such the glorious inheritance which it offered as a substitute for doubts, and fears, and general unbelief.

3. Thus have we noticed some of the more important particulars of Pagan belief, and unbelief, and presented the corrections which Christianity proposed, the doctrines which it offered the world in their stead. Let it be understood that we have not pronounced Christianity true, nor reasoned upon this presumption; we have treated it simply as a religion offering itself as a substitute for that of heathenism. Upon several great points, we have compared together their respective doctrines; and having done this, we are perfectly willing to leave the reader to decide for himself which is the more reasonable, the more worthy, and useful. All we ask is, that, if he finds Christianity pouring in upon the night of heathenism, a light which changes its darkness into day—if he finds it imparting to men more correct, sublime and ennobling views of God, of creation, and of human destiny, than they had ever known before—if he finds such fruits growing out of Christianity, all we ask of the reader is that he shall give it due credit therefor, and judge of its claims accordingly.

## SECTION II.

### MORALS.

1. When speaking of the opinions of the philosophers, for the purpose of showing how far they were benefited by the light of nature, it was observed that a notice of their morals would be given in the present chapter. The reader will have perceived also, that in commenting upon the religious worship of the heathen world in the preceding section, nothing was said respecting the abominations which constituted a large part of it. The notice of these was reserved likewise for this place, that the morals of pagan philosophy, religion, and jurisprudence, might be thrown into one body, and be judged together, with regard to the light of nature, and the necessity of a revelation. We shall now proceed to the examination.

2. (1.) *Philosophy*. Many of the philosophers of Greece and Rome approved of suicide. Hegesias declaimed in its support, and acquired such note as to be called the "Orator of death." He exhorted his disciples if they had the least distaste for life, to kill themselves; and so many followed his advice that he was forbidden by Ptolemy king of Egypt, to teach his doctrines.\* Even the polished

\**Annales de la Vertu*, vol. i. p. 261. "Une foule d'infortunes renonçoit lacement a la vie; qu'un epoux s'arrachoit a son epouse: qu'un pere abandonnoit ses enfans!" See also *De Contemnenda Morte* §29.

Pliny, speaking of one of his friends who, being hopelessly sick, resolved to commit suicide, exclaims, "A resolution this, in my estimation, truly heroical, and worthy of the highest applause."\* Seneca also pleads in its behalf, and points out the several ways in which it may be done.†— Brutus, Cassius, Demosthenes, Zeno, Cato, &c, carried this doctrine into practice by killing themselves. The Stoics made all crimes alike;‡ and affirmed that lying was profitable, and that truth was honorable only when advantageous. Socrates taught his countrymen to regard barbarians as natural enemies; while Aristotle affirmed that nature intended them for slaves. Cicero and Aristotle speak of the forgiveness of injuries as weakness and meanness; and Plato mentions it as being opposed to the sentiments of most of the philosophers. Democritus even applauds a spirit of revenge. The Stoics allowed of excessive drinking, and Cato, Zeno, and Crysippus, were addicted to it; the last of whom died in a drunken fit. A community of women was recommended by many of the philosophers. Cato, of Utica, was known to have lent his wife to Hortensius. Cicero speaks of fornication as that which was never condemned. Diogenes taught and practiced the most brutal lusts, and that in the very streets, pretending to live according to nature. Aristippus inculcated nearly the same, as did many of the Alexandrian school, maintaining that "corporeal pleasure was the ultimate end of man."§ Finally, we have the testi-

\* Letters, lib. i. Letter xxii.

† L'Estrange' Abstract of Seneca's morals. Anger ch. xi. Epistle xxiv.

‡ Horace, Sat. lib. i. s. iii. To this he justly adds, "sensus mor- esque repugnant"—Common sense and morality are opposed to it. Leland says that Bolingbroke pronounces "their theology and morality alike absurd."

§ Priestley's Institutes, P. II. c. i. §. 3.



mony of Cicero and Quintilian to confirm the whole. Cicero, speaking of the philosophers, says—"Who is there of all the philosophers, whose mind, life, and manners were conformable to right reason? Who ever made his philosophy the law and rule of his life, and not a mere show of his wit and parts? Who observed his own instructions, and lived in obedience to his own precepts? On the contrary, many of them were slaves to filthy lusts, many to pride, many to covetousness, &c."\* Quintilian notices the philosophers of his time as follows—"The most notorious vices are screened under the name; and they do not labor to maintain the character of philosophers by virtue and study, but conceal the most vicious lives under an austere look and singularity of dress."† Here Quintilian gives us a summary of the whole system, and in this testimony we see the morality of heathen philosophy, the precepts and practices of those who were regarded as the lights of the world! ‡ Let us turn now and inquire concerning their laws, that we may know whether the morality of these was of a higher order than that of their philosophy.

3. (2.) *Jurisprudence.* The Athenians were allowed by law to make slaves of any they thought fit. The laws which Licurgus gave to Sparta allowed a community of women; and encouraged an old man, having a young wife, to introduce *respectable* young men to her bed, and receive the fruits of this intercourse as his own. They also required the horrible practice of infanticide. When a child was born, it was immediately taken to a kind of committee composed of aged men, for examination. If

\* Tusc. Quest. 2 Watson's Institutes, P. I. c. iii.

† Quoted by Horne, vol. i. p. 16.

‡ Lucian cuts up these philosophers finely in his dialogue, "Menippus et Philonides."

they pronounced it well formed, and likely to be healthy and vigorous, it was given to a nurse : if otherwise it was thrown into a chasm of a neighboring mountain, or left exposed to wild beasts ! Children were regarded as the property of the state, and, if weak and unhealthy, were considered useless. Hence we are informed, mothers were accustomed to bathe their infants in wine ; because those who were sickly, or of a feeble constitution, being unable to bear it, would die, and thus only the healthy be left.\* The laws of Draco punished all crimes and misdemeanors with death. He that was guilty of murder was put to death, and if his neighbor was guilty of laziness, he shared the same fate. Solon banished these, and was perhaps the wisest lawgiver of ancient times. The abomination of sodomy was countenanced by the laws of several of the states of Greece, and by the Cretans it was directly encouraged to prevent the having too many children. †

4. The Roman law gave the father the power of life and death over his children, and he could imprison, scourge and put them to death, if he thought they deserved it.— The same law required that a slave should be put to the rack before giving testimony ; and if a master of a family died suddenly or was killed, his slaves, guilty or innocent, were liable to execution. Tacitus gives as a horrible example of this in the case of one Secundus, a prefect of Rome, who was assassinated by a slave ; in consequence of which his slaves, to the number of *four hundred*, were cruelly put to death ‡ It was the custom, also, to leave their aged and sick slaves to perish, and sometimes, when sick, they killed them, as we would kill a sick dog. Thousands were trained for their gladiatorial shows, and thus made to destroy each other for the amusement of the peo-

\*Plutarch, Lycurgus. †Priestley's Institutes, P. II. c. i. §3.

‡ Annal. lib. xiv. c. 42—48.

ple. At Sparta, when the Helot slaves became too numerous, they did not hesitate to butcher them until their number was sufficiently reduced ; and the boys were applauded for killing them by surprise. By a law of the Babylonians every woman was required, once in her life to present herself before the temple of Mylitta or Venus, and receive the embraces of the first stranger that offered himself ; and the price of her prostitution was paid into the treasury of the temple.\* Such was the morality of the heathen laws. We proceed next to that of their religion.

5. (3.) *Religion* At Sparta boys were whipped to death in honor of Diana ; and young women in Arcadia, to appease Bacchus. In their divinations they murdered infants for the express purpose of raking their entrails to gain an insight into futurity. This is witnessed by the first writers, as Herodotus, Cicero, Tacitus, &c. Horace in one of his Epodes introduces a boy entreating the gods in a most thrilling manner, that they will deliver him from the power of the hags who are preparing to slay him.† The Cimbri and Celtæ divined from the convulsions and agonies of human victims whom they had ripped open in sacrifice. The Gauls, according to Cæsar, in times of pestilence or danger, made vast images of wicker work, filled them with prisoners and criminals, or if these were wanting, with innocent persons, and set fire to them as sacrifices to their gods, in hopes to appease them.‡ In Scandinavia, now Sweden, they had festivals at which, in time of war, nine captives, in peace nine slaves, were immolated. Hacon, king of Norway, sacrificed his son, that he might be prospered in battle ; and Aune, king of Sweden, offered up to Odin, his nine sons, that the god would prolong his life. The Danes every ninth year sacrificed nine-

\* See Beloe's Herodotus, B. i. ch, 199.

† Epode v.

‡ De Bello Galico, lib. vi. §16.

ty-nine men. The Slavi of Russia presented Suetovid, the god of war, with an annual burnt offering of three hundred prisoners.

6. At Rome human sacrifices were offered annually in the first ages of the Republic. And though in the year of the city, 657, this was forbidden by a decree of the senate, we still find that two men were slain with the usual ceremonies in the Campus Martius, as late as the time of Julius Cæsar. And Augustus, after having subdued L. Antonius, ordered *three hundred* senators and knights to be sacrificed at the altar of Julius, on the ides of March, to appease his manes. Seneca speaks of this in his clemency. Men were thrown alive into the sea, as offerings to Neptune.—Xerxes buried alive nine young men and nine virgins, on his march to Greece; and his wife commanded fourteen children of noble Persian birth, to be sacrificed to the deity which reigned beneath the earth. The Carthaginians were accustomed to sacrifice noble children to Saturn, but afterwards substituted those of slaves and foreigners. When besieged by Agathocles, and reduced to extremities, they supposed it owing to the anger of Saturn because of this deception. Two hundred children of the first families in Carthage were, therefore, immediately immolated to appease his wrath; and three hundred citizens voluntarily offered themselves as an additional sacrifice to atone for the offence. The Pelasgi at one period sacrificed a tenth part of all their children, in obedience to an oracle. The Egyptians of Heliopolis at one time murdered three men every day, as an offering to Juno. Such were the cruelties of heathen worship.\* Its licentiousness was nothing inferior.

\* Those who would see more may consult Turner's *Anglo Saxons*, vol. i. Enfield's *Hist. of Philosophy*, B. i. x. Wheaton's *Northmen*, 138—141. Tytler's *History*, B. v. chap. vi. Ree's *Cyclope-*

7. As a foundation, the very Gods themselves are represented as the most drunken, lewd, and abandoned characters, that it is possible to conceive; and countless are the stories of their revels and debaucheries. Gibbon says the Antonines would be disgraced by a comparison even with Jupiter; and adds that the characters of Augustus and Julius Cæsar were far superior to those of the popular deities." Varro says "all things are attributed to the Gods, which belong even to men of the vilest characters." As an example: In the first book of the Iliad, Homer informs us that Juno, the wife of Jupiter, and queen of heaven, became jealous of him, and in an assembly of the gods began to quarrel with him. He replies with fierceness, and soon all heaven is in a brawl. Vulcan, knowing their vulnerable points, brings forth the goblet, and no sooner do they get taste of the wine, than they forget the fight, and "fall to, like veteran toppers, and drink all day, until at night-fall they have just soberness enough left to help them to crawl into bed." The influence of such a system upon the morals of the people, is easily imagined. "Drunkenness on a thousand occasions became an act of *religious duty*; and Aristotle explains the word *THoinai* (feasts) by an etymological exposition, "*that it was thought a duty to the gods to be drunk!*"\* A young man in Terence justifies himself in lewdness by the example of Jupiter;† and the Cretans excused their licentiousness in the same way. The

dia, *Sardinia*. Horne's Introduction, vol. i. History of Priestcraft. Plutarch, Themistocles § 17. Beloe's Herodotus, B. i. 216. *Massgetæ*; ii, 219; iv. 71,72; vii. 114 and the *Notes*. Gibbon's Rome, chapt. ix. x. and Leland on Revelation.

\* See an article in the American Monthly Magazine, entitled "The Ancient Literature of Intemperance."

† The sarcastic Lucian represents Menippus as indulging in all manner of vice, which he supposed must be honorable and praiseworthy, because the gods did it. Dial. Menip. et Phil.

feasts in honor of Bacchus were one continued series of riot revel and drunkenness; and he who made himself most beastly was most acceptable to the god. The festivals of Ceres and Cybele were attended with such notorious licentiousness, that married women could not attend them with safety. At Sparta, young women appeared naked at some public exercises; and the "Ludi Florales" of Rome were managed by abandoned prostitutes, who ran naked, hither and thither, dancing, singing," &c.\* The Assyrian priests selected the most beautiful women of the nation for the use of their God Belus; and the Egyptians of Thebes did the same for their Jupiter. Many of the temples of the ancient deities were supported by prostitution; while others were enabled by wealth already acquired to maintain women for the use of the gods nominally, but really for the priests. The temple of Venus was an example of this last; which, according to Strabo, was so immensely rich, that it maintained more than a thousand prostitutes, dedicated to the service of the goddess. Much more of a like character might be added, but the nature of the subject is such that we forbear, and refer the reader to those writers who have treated it more at length.†

8. Such are the abominations of heathenism in its three great departments—philosophy, law, and religion. And now we ask any candid man to contemplate this horrible and revolting picture, and answer if he does not think that the world needed some other guide than the light of nature; if he does not see the necessity of a revelation which should lift them from their degradation and pollution, and turn them from these rites of blood, and cruelty,

\* Priestley's *Institutes*, P. L. c. i. § 2.

† See *History of Priestcraft*, Leland, Priestly &c. See also Tholuck on the *Moral Influence of Heathenism*, *Biblical Repository*, Vol. ii, pp. 441-464; and *Universalist Quarterly* for July, 1844, pp. 261-270.

and iniquity. We believe not that there is a rational man living, who can look these things steadily in the face, and say, Nay. It only remains now to be ascertained whether Christianity was of a character to correct and remove these fearful evils. We found that so far as opinions were concerned, it was perfectly adapted to the condition of the heathen world; let us now see if it be equally well adapted to the improvement of its morality. And here it may be well to note, that the reply sometimes made to the facts just presented, viz.: that Christians also are immoral, or at least some of them, vicious and cruel in their principles and practice, does not meet the case. It is granted that many professed Christians are bad men; but then, in being so, they transgress the requirements of their religion—they go contrary to its most solemn injunctions. On the other hand, when the Pagan was a bad man, cruel and licentious, he acted in obedience to his religion. It taught him, it commanded him to be so, as we have seen. This is an important distinction, which must not be lost sight of. The immorality of Paganism was a part of the system, the direct result of its teachings. But Christianity sternly denounces all immorality and wrong, and if its followers are guilty of these, they go directly contrary to its teachings and commandments. This will appear in what follows.

9. The great points in which the morals of heathenism required a thorough reformation, may be repeated in a few words. 1. Neglect and contempt of the virtues of humility, love for fellow men, forgiveness of injuries, &c. 2. Cruelty; which consisted in the inhuman treatment and murder of slaves, the fearful sacrifice of men's lives, the destruction of infants, &c. 3. General licentiousness—as drunkenness, adultery, fornication and all manner of lewdness. In these respects their philosophy, laws, and religion, which sanctioned these abominations, called loudly for an entire revolution. And now let us turn to the mo-

ality which Christianity offered in the place of these, and see whether the call was answered.

10. [1.] *The humble virtues.* "Blessed are the meek, and the poor in spirit. Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart. Be not puffed up one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. Recompense no man evil for evil; be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. If thy brother trespass against thee, forgive him; if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him. Ye have heard it hath been said, thou shalt hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you—that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain upon the just and the unjust. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst, give him drink. All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Such were the doctrines which Christianity offered in place of pride, hatred, and revenge.

11. [2.] *Cruelty.* "Be ye merciful as your Father also is merciful. Masters do good unto your servants, forbearing threatening, giving unto them that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him. Put on bowels of mercies, kindness, long suffering; and above all, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. Have compassion one of another; love as brethren; be pitiful. Thou shalt do no murder. The Son of man is not come



to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Do not kill, for no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. The law is for murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers, and for man-slayers. He shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy, and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Finally, be of one mind, kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love."

12. [3.] *General licentiousness.* "The works of the flesh are manifest; which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like. We beseech you to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. Fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient. Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God. Ye have heard it said by them of olden times, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart. The time past of our lives may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries; wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot. Be not ye, therefore, partakers with them; have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. Cast off, therefore, the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light; walk honestly as in the day; not in riot-

ing and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness. Live no longer in the lusts of the flesh, but to the will of God. Abstain from all appearance of evil ; for the grace of God, which bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared, teaching us that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should learn to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit ; for as he that has called you is holy, so be ye holy, perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”\*

13. Such is the morality of Christianity ; such the precepts which it offered to the heathen world in exchange for the foul doctrines and practices that have been mentioned. And how perfect is its adaptation in every respect to their situation. Can any one fail to perceive, that many of the exhortations and precepts which have been repeated are aimed at the very foundation of their corruptions and abuses ? They strike down alike the philosophy of the learned, and the superstitions of the ignorant ; they sweep away together the savage cruelty of law and custom, and the licentiousness and human butchery of idolatry ; and open to them a purer and a better way, pouring in upon their darkened minds the light of wisdom, and truth, and virtue. Thus, while its doctrines on the one hand, correct their errors of opinion with regard to Deity and his worship ; its precepts on the other, correct their errors in morals and practice. Its entire fitness to the circumstances of the heathen world is, therefore, made manifest beyond all question ; and it is believed the veriest sceptic that ever lived, could not have framed a religion more perfectly suited, in every particular, to the condition of

\* Matt. v. vii. xi. Luke xvii. Rom. xii. xiii. 1 Cor. iv. vi. 2 Cor. vii. Gal. v. Ephesians v. vi. Col. iii. 1 Thess. v. Titus ii. James ii. 1 Peteri. ii. iii. iv. 1 John iii.

mankind at the period of the promulgation of Christianity.

14. Since, therefore, there is such an exact adaptation to circumstances, this religion certainly comes to us with a weighty claim upon our favorable attention—yea, this very fact seems a strong presumptive proof of its divine origin. Be this, however, as it may; one thing is nevertheless certain, that whether of God or of man, it was precisely such a religion as the world needed.

15. Once more we note our progress. 1. There is a God. 2. A revelation from him is reasonable and probable. 3. Its necessity proved from the moral and religious condition of the world previous to the coming of Christ. 4. Christianity perfectly adapted to this condition, in doctrine and precept.—Our next step will be to bring forward the direct evidence of the truth of Christianity.

## CHAPTER V.

### HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN HISTORY.

#### SECTION I.

##### WERE THERE CHRISTIANS EIGHTEEN HUNDRED YEARS AGO?

1. THERE is in the world a class of people, or a sect of religionists, known by the name of Christians. They have a rule of faith and practice contained in their sacred books, which commonly pass under the title of the "New Testament." This sect is numerous, having spread itself into every part and portion of the civilized world; and it is signalized for zeal in the diffusion of its doctrines among the nations of the earth. The number at present believing these doctrines, is about two hundred millions, scattered throughout America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. We wish to know when and how Christians began to exist. They affirm that they owe their origin, name, and religion, to one Jesus Christ, who lived eighteen hundred years since, and taught, and wrought miracles in Judea. Our first object then will be to ascertain the truth of this affirmation, to learn whether Christians and Christianity have been in existence eighteen hundred years.

2. 1836—1500. That there are multitudes of Christians in the world at the present day, is a naked fact, which requires no proof. It is an easy matter to trace them back three hundred years, that is to say, to the year 1500 of the present era. In the year 1620, we see the Christian pilgrims landing upon the rock of Plymouth. If from this rock we embark for Europe, we find the Christians disputing with the Moors for the sovereignty of Spain—thence their history leads us up through the league formed in France against the Protestants to 1572. From this we may go back with them through the reigns of Elizabeth and Mary of England—thence to the treaty of Passau for the establishment of Lutheranism, and from this through the Reformation by Luther to the year 1500.

3. 1500—1000. Through the history of Europe, we go with the Christians from this first date to their expulsion from Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. Passing from this to England again, we come to the times of Wickliffe the Reformer, who made no small stir about the year 1377. Through abundant records of the Christians in England, France, Italy, and Germany, we may go up to the taking of Ptolemais by the Turks in 1291, which event ended the dominion of the Christians in that quarter. From this we go back through that series of wonderful events, known all the world over, by the name of Crusades; and here we find all the Christian nations of Europe, engaged in the enterprise of wresting the Holy Land from the hands of the Infidel Turks. It is sufficient for us to say that the last of these expeditions took place in 1248, and the first in 1095. Here then we are left at about the year 1000.

4. 1000—500. The history of the Christians from 1000 backward to 800, is the general and individual history of Europe. At the year 800, the celebrated Charle-

mange was crowned sole emperor of the west ; and from him we may follow the Christians upward through the contests which raged at this period, to the year 713, when they were entirely defeated in Spain, and the empire of the Saracens firmly established. From this we may travel back with them to the days of Mahomet, whose history shows the existence of multitudes of Christians before him. He was born in 571. From this date we find the Christians standing forth in bold relief through the whole history of Justinian the emperor, and his renowned general Belisarius, who stood at their head in defending them against the inroads of the Moors and Vandals on the one hand, and the Goths and kindred barbarians on the other. This leaves us at the year 500.

5. 500—300. From the year 500, the Christians may be followed upward through the terrible persecutions which they suffered in Britain, Spain, Gaul, Italy, Africa, &c. Their history is also inseparably associated with that of all the emperors of the eastern and western empires, Clovis, Theodoric, Theodosius, Valentinian, Honorius, &c. In the year 361, we find the emperor Julian, who was himself, at first, a Christian, but afterwards apostatised, employing all his efforts to destroy Christianity. He wrote a long and laborious work against it with the view of proving it an imposture, but failed of his object, as his writings did not stop the progress of it, though they may, in connection with his other acts, have checked it somewhat. The next great event which we meet in going back from the reign of Julian, is the conversion of Constantine the great to Christianity, which took place in the year 312. This surely proves the existence of Christians, and of Christianity, and shows that at this period it had acquired much importance, inasmuch as it became under Constantine the established religion of the Roman empire. A few years more carry us back to Hierocles, who was a famous

opposer of the Christian religion, and who wrote two books against it, in which he endeavored to prove contradictions in the Scriptures, and that Jesus was no greater than one Apollonius, who, he affirmed, had done wonders. This leaves us at the year 300. To this date then we have traced the Christians through the history of all Europe, and especially through that of the Roman empire ; and we find them at this time in large numbers, taking part in all the important events of the day, and possessing so great an influence as to have one of their number at the head of the first and most extensive empire in the world.

6. 300—200. We have now arrived at an interesting point in our inquiry, and all our attention should be summoned to duty. We are drawing near to the time at which Christians have fixed the commencement of their religion and sect. We are within three hundred years of the birth of Christ, as stated by them ; and within less than that of the great events which they affirm gave birth to the claims that they set up for the miraculous powers of their Master, and the divine origin of their faith. Every step that we take now brings us more feelingly towards the point mentioned, and should therefore be taken with caution. We have certainly ascertained by an appeal to the history of the world during this period, that the Christians have been in existence as a distinct people, having a distinct religion, more than fifteen hundred years. We have gone back from the present time through the records of the great nations of Europe, and other divisions of the earth ; through the changes and destinies of the Roman empire, up to the year 300, at which time we find these people in great numbers, and with Constantine at their head, exerting a decided influence upon the condition of mankind. The questions now arise—How long before this date did they exist ? Can we

trace them back three hundred years farther? Is the fountain head at the point where they have declared it to be, or is it this side of that? These are questions of no small import, and let us proceed to answer with a careful hand.

7. There were, during these one hundred years, that is, from 300 back to 200, no less than twenty-two emperors of Rome, from Diocletian, who was declared emperor in 284, upward to Septimius Severus, who held the reins at the beginning of the third century. In examining the history of these emperors, we find abundant proof of the existence of the Christians in great numbers. It is almost impossible to separate their history from that of these people and their religion; and in some cases indeed it is entirely so, inasmuch as the whole period of their respective reigns was occupied in opposition to Christianity, with the view of destroying it. And here we cannot but pay some attention to the testimony of the celebrated Gibbon, whose well known enmity to the Christian religion will clear him of the suspicion of favoring it.

8. In gathering the materials for his history of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, so abundant did he find the evidence of the wide spread of this doctrine and its followers, that he makes the following statement, truly honorable to his integrity.—“There is the strongest reason to believe, that, before the reign of Diocletian and Constantine, *the faith of Christ had been preached in every province, and in all the great cities of the empire.* The rich provinces that extend from the Euphrates to the Ionian Sea, were the principal theatre, on which the apostle of the Gentiles displayed his zeal and piety. The seeds of the Gospel, which he had scattered in a fertile soil, were diligently cultivated by his disciples; and it should seem, that, during the first two centuries, the most considerable body of Christians was contained within those lim-



its. Among the societies which were instituted in Syria, none were more ancient or more illustrious than those of Damascus, of Berea or Aleppo, and of Antioch. The prophetic introduction of the Apocalypse has described and immortalized the seven churches of Asia—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardes, Laodicea, and Philadelphia; and their colonies were soon diffused over that populous country. In a very early period, the islands of Cyprus and Crete, the provinces of Thrace and Macedonia, gave a favorable reception to the new religion: and Christian republics were soon founded in the cities of Corinth, of Sparta, Athens.”\*

9. Such is the testimony of Mr. Gibbon, and, coming from a known enemy of Christianity, and at the same time a careful historian, it will be considered as decisive of the fact, that there were multitudes of Christians scattered throughout Europe, part of Asia, and the islands of the Mediterranean, before the reign of Diocletian, or prior to the year 284. And it is not only valuable in regard to this date, for the language is such, as to have necessary reference to a much earlier period. The truth of Mr. Gibbon’s testimony is established in the record of no less than four or five distinct persecutions carried on against the Christians in this century by the Roman emperors; the last of them under Valerian, or perhaps Diocletian, and the first in the year 202, under Septimius Severus. To these evidences it may be well to add the witness of Lampridius, one of the writers of the the Augustan history. He lived about the year 306, and wrote the life of Alexander Severus, whose reign began in the year 222. His testimony therefore, belongs to this date. Of this emperor he says,—“He had a mind to build a temple to Christ, and to receive him into the number of the deities.” He

\*Decline and Fall, c. xv.

farther says, that he was forbidden to do this by the oracles, and adds elsewhere that "he honored Christ in his domestic chapel, and showed favor to the Christians." He mentions an instance as follows:—"The Christians being molested by the vintners of Rome, on account of a building where they used to assemble, the emperor decided the dispute in favor of the Christians." In addition to this, he informs us that the emperor Heliogabalus, whose reign commenced in the year 218, "erected a temple on Mount Palatine, (in Rome,) and said that the religion of the Jews, and Samaritans, and Christians must be transported thither, that it might comprehend the mysteries of all religions." These testimonies show that the Christians were not only numerous at this period, but had acquired great importance; and also that Christ was known as the author of their religion, and was so much honored by the Roman emperor, as to have been thought worthy of a place among the deities. To bring us to the years 200, we would merely add that Spartian, another Roman historian, makes mention at this date of a decree forbidding the people to become Christians.

10. 200—100. In the space here named, the empire was ruled by seven different emperors, some of whom were noted, as Marcus Antonius, the philosopher, Adrian, and Trajan. Under two of these there were persecutions; the last in the year 118, which of course proves that the Christians were found in great numbers at this date. But to place this beyond question, the reader will permit us to appeal once more to Mr. Gibbon, who would certainly say no more in this respect than the voice of history compelled him to say. He speaks of the complaints of the heathen at this age in consequence of the great increase of the Christians, and adds,—“From the writings of Lucian a philosopher who had studied mankind, and described their manners in the most lively colors, we may

learn that under the reign of Commodus, his native country of Pontus was filled with Epicureans and Christians." The reign of Commodus began in the year 180, and continued to the year 193. With the aid then, of Mr. Gibbon and Lucian, both enemies of the Christian faith, we are carried back to the year 180, at which date we meet with vast numbers of Christians. As Lucian's testimony is important we shall quote it separately. He speaks of one Teregrinus, who had passed himself off for a Christian, and says that "he learned the wonderful doctrines of the Christians by conversing with their priests and Scribes near Palestine." Again, he says, "These Christians still worship that great man who was crucified in Palestine, because he introduced into the world this new religion." This evidence of the hostile Lucian establishes two very important points—1. The existence of great numbers of Christians in Pontus, or Asia Minor. 2. That the author of their religion was a "great man, and was crucified in Palestine."

11. If we go back to the year 161, we shall meet with the philosophical emperor Marcus Antonius. In his book of "Meditations," he thus exclaims:—"What a soul is that which is prepared, even now presently, if needful, to be separated from the body, whether it be to be extinguished or to be dispersed, or to subsist still. But this readiness must proceed from a well-weighed judgment, not from mere obstinacy like the Christians." This proves the existence of Christians at this date, and farther shows that they were persecuted, as will be seen in the mention of their fortitude in death, though Antoninus is pleased to call it obstinacy. From this emperor, we go up to Adrian who reigned between the years 138 and 118. He visited Egypt, and during his stay there, he wrote the following letter to Servianus, the husband of his sister:—"Adrian Augustus, to the consul Servianus, wisheth health. I have

found Egypt, my dear Servianus, which you commended to me, all over fickle, and inconstant, and continually shaken by the slightest reports of fame. The worshipers of Serapis are Christians, and they are devoted to Serapis, who call themselves Christ's bishops. There is no ruler of the Jewish synagogue, no Samaritan, no presbyter of the Christians, no mathematician, no soothsayer, no anointer, who does not worship Serapis. The patriarch himself, if he should come to Egypt, would be required by some to worship Serapis, by others, Christ. A seditious and turbulent sort of men. However, the city is rich and populous. Nor are any idle; some are employed in making glass, others paper, others in weaving linen. They have one God; him the Christians, him the Jews, him all the Gentile people worship."\* It will be seen that there is some confusion in the statement of Adrian respecting the worship of Serapis, one of the Egyptian deities, by the Christians; but with this we are not concerned at present. We only want the testimony of Adrian to the existence of Christians at the time this letter was written, which was in 134, the year of the consulship of Servianus. This witness, as the reader will perceive, carries us to within a hundred years of the death of Christ. Beside the above document, we have a letter written to Adrian by Serenius Graniaus, in which he comments with some freedom upon the injustice and absolute cruelty of putting the Christians to death when they had been guilty of no crime, merely to gratify the clamors of the people. This was written about the year 126, and, in connection with other causes, was followed by a rescript from the emperor somewhat favorable to the Christians.

\* "Illi qui Serapin colunt, *Christiani*, sunt, et devoti Serapi, qui se *CHRISTI* episcopos dicunt." et seq. Flavius Vopiscus, in vita Saturnini, quoted by Montesquieu in *La Politique Des Romains dans la Religion*.

12. The next remove carries us up to the year 107, in which the celebrated letter of the younger Pliny was written. Pliny had been appointed under Trajan, proconsul of Bithynia, a province of the Roman empire, bordering on the Black sea. The death of great numbers of Christians in consequence of former edicts, alarmed the humane governor, and he accordingly wrote to the emperor for advice. He says that he had questioned, threatened, and punished some; a part of whom denied they were Christians, and a part recanted, and offered incense before Trajan's statue; but, he adds, "there is no forcing those who are really Christians into any of these compliances." "Others," he continues, "owned they had been of that number formerly, but had now (some above three, others more, and a few above twenty years ago) renounced that error." "It appears to be a matter highly deserving your consideration; more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, which have already extended, and are still likely to extend, to persons of all ranks and ages, and even of both sexes. In fact, this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread its infection among the neighboring villages and country. Nevertheless it still seems possible to restrain its progress. The temples, at least, which were once almost deserted, begin now to be frequented; and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived; to which I must add, there is again also a general demand for the victims, which for some time past had met but few purchasers."\* This letter of Pliny proves what immense numbers of Christians were found in Bithynia at the time it was written, seventy-five years after the period at which Christ is said to have been crucified! This surely shows that they must have begun to exist some

\* Melmeth's Pliny, lib. x. Letter 97.

time prior to this date ; and it is proved also from the expressions, "the temples were *once almost deserted*," the revival of the "sacred solemnities after a *long intermission*." It is evident that they must have exerted a very wide and decided influence, to have caused such a general desertion of the heathen temples. This influence could not have been acquired in a day, or a year ; neither could the "contagious superstition" have spread through cities, towns, and villages, infecting all ranks and ages, in this brief space. These circumstances prove that it must have had its rise at least, several years before this date ; and were we destitute of earlier authority, we might, justified by the laws of evidence, throw it back to the point at which Christians place it. But we are not reduced to this course. There is proof in the letter itself of the existence of Christians twenty years previous, for Pliny states that some whom he examined owned that they had been of this number above twenty years prior to that. This carries us to the year 87, or 54 years after the death of Christ. But we have other witnesses to bring forward.

13. 100—33, the date at which Christians fix the death of Christ. Within the period here named there were not less than eleven emperors, several of whom are well known as being of most depraved and abandoned characters. With regard to the existence of Christians at this time, their origin and name, there is abundant and unquestionable evidence. We say unquestionable, because it comes from the highest authority, from historians who were themselves strongly prejudiced against Christians, and whose testimony is therefore free from all suspicion. It is of the same class indeed with that of Pliny, and other heathen witnesses who have been cited. Tacitus, the celebrated Roman historian, who was born about fifteen years after the crucifixion of Christ, gives us an account of

the great fire at Rome. This happened in the tenth year of Nero, and as his reign began in 54, it brings the events of which Tacitus speaks to the year 64, about 30 years from the crucifixion. It was reported, he informs us, that Nero had himself set the city on fire, and to avoid the odium, charged it upon the Christians. He states it thus:—"Nero procured others to be accused, and inflicted the severest punishments upon those people who were held in abhorrence for their crimes, and were commonly known by the name of Christians. They had their name from CHRIST, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death by the procurator, Pontius Pilate.\* This pernicious superstition, though repressed for a time, broke forth again, and spread itself not only throughout Judea, the source of the evil, but even through the city, (Rome) whither, from every quarter, flow all things detestable and shameful, and find a ready reception. At first, indeed, only those who confessed were seized; but afterwards, by their discovery, *a great multitude* were condemned, not so much for the crime of burning the city, as for their hatred of mankind."†

14. To the preceding we have to add the testimony of Suetonius, who wrote the lives of the first twelve emperors of Rome. In the life of Nero, he says, "The Christians were also punished, a race of men of a new and mischievous superstition."‡ In relation to the event re-

\* "*Vulgus Christianos appellabat. Auctor nominis ejus CHRISTUS, Tiberio imperitante, per Procurtorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat.*"

† Tacitus, *Annal. lib. xv. c. 44.*

‡ Suetonius, in *Norene*, c. xvi. We have omitted the passage in the life of Claudius, because some doubt whether Suetonius refers to Jesus Christ. The passage is this—"He expelled from Rome the Jews who were continually creating tumults, Chrestus being their leader." c. xxv. Of this a celebrated critic says—"Christum

corded in these passages, Mr. Gibbon observes,—“The most sceptical criticism is obliged to respect the truth of this extraordinary fact, and the integrity of this celebrated passage of Tacitus. The former is confirmed by the diligent and accurate Suetonius, who mentions the punishment which Nero inflicted upon the Christians. The latter may be proved by the consent of the most ancient manuscripts; by the inimitable character of Tacitus; by his deputation, which guarded his text from the interpolations of pious fraud; and by the purport of his narration.”\* Here, then, with the approbation of Mr. Gibbon, we go back to the year 64, thirty years after the death of Christ, at which time are found great bodies of Christians, not only throughout Judea, but at Rome. To the testimony brought forward here, we must give attention in several important particulars. It will at once be seen that it establishes beyond all dispute the declaration of the Christians with which this section commenced—that they owe their origin, name, and religion, to one Jesus Christ, who lived and taught in Judea, and was there put to death eighteen hundred years ago. Tacitus affirms, 1. That there were great multitudes of Christians at Rome in the year 64. Of course, if they existed in such numbers then, they must have had an origin some time prior to this. But we are not left to inferences; for Tacitus states, 2. That they had “their name from Christ;” and 3. That

*Dominum nostrum, hic falsse intellectum, adhuc mihi persuadere non possum.*” Another says—“Non Jesu Christo, sed Judæo quodædam quodam Chresto impulsore.” Gassellius, Tom. i. Addenda p. 9. *Tacita Opera*, Tom. ii. p. 76. Boston, 1817. A. Clarke, *Acta xviii.* 2. Still, after looking at it carefully, there seems very little room for doubt. This confounding the Jews and Christians together was a common thing with the Romans, and easily explained.

\* *Decline and Fall*, c. xvi.



this Christ was put to death in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate. And lastly, the truth of these facts is endorsed by Suetonius, and admitted by Mr. Gibbon.

15. The exactness of this account is remarkable. Tacitus tells us that Christ was crucified under the procuratorship of Pilate. Pilate, according to Josephus, was recalled to Rome for mal-administration; he set out immediately, but Tiberius died while he was on his way.\* Now Tiberius died on the 16th of March, of the year 37, and of course Pilate must have put Christ to death previous to this, because his procuratorship ceased before this date. If we here take into the account the series of tumults, as mentioned by Josephus, which resulted in the embassy of the Samaritan senate to Vitellius, the time occupied in the debates of the senate, the journey of the ambassador to Syria, the hearing of the complaint, and the return of Marcellus with orders for Pilate—we shall find that, at least, it will be necessary to go back one or two years farther, which would leave us at the year 35. This brings us sufficiently near to prove the truth of their statement as named above.

16. We have now arrived at an interesting stage in our investigation. It has been proved by an appeal to the pages of acknowledged history, that Christianity began its existence in the reign of Tiberius, emperor of Rome, more than eighteen centuries ago. We have followed the Christians from our own time upward through all the changes of empires to that date; we have in every step of our progress found their history and name inwoven with those of the greatest nations of the earth, so that it is impossible to separate the one from the other.

\* Josephus, Ant. lib. xviii. c. 4. §2

There is no place to stop this side of Tiberius ; for whenever we do this, we deny all preceding history. If any one questions this, we ask him to place his finger on that point in the present era, beyond which he asserts there were no Christians—we ask him to designate the page, or name the year in which Christianity commenced its being. Let this be attempted and it will be found that it has insuperable difficulties ; that, fix where we will short of Tiberius, we are involved in a war of extermination with the very source of human knowledge. Should we affirm that no Christians were found earlier than the year 500, then must we deny the history of the Roman emperors and empire prior to this, for they are so connected with each other, that to deny one is to deny both. If we throw out that part of the history which relates to the Christians, we throw out more than half the history of the empire, yea, nearly all ; for there would be innumerable chasms which never could be filled but by the introduction of the Christians.—Should we place their origin at the year 300, or even 200, and affirm that they had no existence before this ; then we write falsehood upon the foreheads of Marcus Antonius, Adrian, Pliny, and others ; and if we place it at 100, or at 50, we must reject what all the world have received, the well-known histories of Tacitus, and Suetonius, and the testimony of Lucian. We are compelled, therefore, according to all the rules and laws of historical evidence, to admit the truth of the Christian statement, that they have been in existence, as a distinct sect, more than eighteen hundred years, having a distinct religion and name derived from Jesus Christ, who lived and taught in Judea, and was there put to death by Pontius Pilate the procurator.

17. Our next step will be to inquire into the genuineness of the Christian histories; or, in other words, to ascertain whether the different books of the New Testament were written by those whose names they bear, and at the time affirmed by Christians.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN HISTORY.

#### SECTION I.

##### WERE THE BOOKS WHICH COMPOSE THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITTEN BY THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST? ARGUMENT FROM CIRCUMSTANCES.

1. In the last section it was proved that Christians had existed as a distinct people from the commencement of the present era, and that they derived their name and faith from Jesus Christ who lived at the time of said commencement. It is not our object here to prove that Christ wrought miracles, or was endowed with supernatural powers—with this question we are not now concerned.—Whether it be true or not, it is certain from the evidence already advanced, that he possessed sufficient influence, acquired by his teachings and works, to establish a new religion, a religion which has gone on from that period to the present steadily increasing, until it has embraced in its profession more than two hundred millions of the most enlightened portion of the human race. This is a fact which admits of no question, and it is enough for the ob-

ject in view in this section. If then Jesus Christ taught such important doctrines, and performed such works, as caused him to be received by great numbers in that age as a divine person, is it not reasonable to suppose that those men who had been with him, and had heard and seen all things said and done by him,—is it not most reasonable to suppose that they would have written some account of his life and actions for the benefit of those who had not enjoyed the privilege of hearing and seeing? Does not this seem the most natural thing in the world? Is it not a conclusion justified by the circumstances? Let us take an example in the way of illustration.

2. The name of Napoleon Bonaparte is familiar to every one. He was a remarkable man, and the fame and influence he acquired by his wonderful deeds were unequalled by those of any conqueror who preceded him. He had many followers in the path of glory and power; many who were entirely devoted to him, and who began with him, and with him went through all his victories and triumphs, through all his struggles, and difficulties, and dangers, even unto the end. They were witnesses and sharers in all his prosperity and adversity, and at all times they had a confidence in him equalled only by their unbounded admiration and affection for him. Now if, under these circumstances these men had never said, had never written any thing concerning Napoleon, if they had given to the world no account or history of his life and astonishing exploits, should we not have been very much surprised? Would not every one have regarded their conduct as strange and altogether unaccountable? Most certainly this would have been the case. Indeed, the world would not have endured this; those who had heard of the fame, and had admired the genius of Napoleon, would have made repeated and urgent calls upon these associates of the great man to give them some history of him, some

account of his wonderful deeds. This is on the supposition of their silence ; but if we reflect a moment, we shall see that these men would not of themselves have been silent. Their very love for their leader, their admiration of his character and deeds, and the wish that others should know and admire, would prompt them to write his history for the perusal of mankind. This is precisely what we should expect from them, and this is precisely what we have, as is seen in the histories and biographies of Bourienne, Les Cases, &c.

3. We have now only to apply this to the case in question, and we shall at once see its force. Jesus Christ had, by his teachings and doings, acquired a very great influence over the minds of numbers who lived at that age, and were witnesses of his actions, and hearers of his doctrines. Many became strongly attached to him, as might have been expected ; they followed him from place to place, were with him from the beginning to the end of his eventful life. If, as we have seen in the section before this, multitudes in after years, who had not been witnesses of his deeds, who had not seen or heard him, but had only received the account of his doctrines and of the things which he had done, from others ; if, we repeat, these were willing to suffer the most cruel persecutions rather than be unfaithful to him, how much stronger must have been the admiration, the affection, and fidelity of those who were his immediate companions throughout his mission, and were eye and ear witnesses of all his works and teachings ! And is it possible, then, that they would have failed to commit them to the keeping of records ? Can we believe that they would have written no history of the life and acts of him whom they loved so fervently ? And when they saw the rapidly increasing number of those who believed and embraced the religion of their Master, would they not see also the absolute ne-

cessity of this? And indeed would not the believers require it of them, by the same rule that the world would have required of Napoleon's companions a history, had they failed to furnish it? We have already seen, from the testimony of Tacitus, that within thirty years after the death of Christ his followers had increased to such a degree, that they had not only spread all over Judea, but even through Rome itself. Now, would not these distant and widely scattered believers require some authentic account of him whose religion they professed, and whose character they so much admired? Certainly this want must have existed, and the demand would have been made for a history of this kind direct from the hands of those who had been with him, who had seen him with their own eyes, and with their own ears had heard him. Nothing less than this would have satisfied them. Aside from the truth or falsehood, then, of the present gospels, we ask, would it not have been surprising had these immediate disciples given no such record or history? Let it be repeated that here we have nothing to do with the genuineness or authenticity of the evangelical histories as now received; we only put it upon the ground of rational probability, and on this ground we leave it with any man, be he ever so sceptical, to decide whether under these circumstances it would not be most singular had the companions of Jesus Christ left no account of his life and actions. And we do verily believe that every candid person will readily admit that it is a fair conclusion, that there should be some such history as this, that it is exactly what we should most naturally expect, and what experience warrants us in expecting, as the case of Napoleon, already cited, and others, testify.

4. But it will probably be said here, that, admitting the companions or immediate disciples of Christ may have written a history of the character mentioned, what evi-

dence have we that our present gospels are those histories? We answer, the same evidence we have that the *Æneid* is the work of Virgil, or the *Iliad* of Homer; or *Paradise Lost* of Milton; the same evidence we have that the *Oration*s of Cicero, and the *Histories* of Tacitus, were the productions of these men, or that the reputed works of Martin Luther were really written by him. We may go farther; we have evidence in favor of the genuineness of the four Gospels, in ratio of ten to one, when compared with that in favor of the *Æneid* of Virgil, the *Histories* of Tacitus, or any other ancient work. Where one proof can be offered to show that the Roman *Histories* were really written by Tacitus, we can offer ten, and indeed twenty, in proof that the Gospel *Histories* were written by those whose names they bear. And we are willing to try them by this rule; we ask no favors in their behalf; we are perfectly satisfied to place them on the ground with any other ancient production, and wish them only to be tried in the same manner, and established by the same kind and quantity of evidence. We claim nothing for them on the score of their sacredness; their genuineness and authenticity are entirely a matter of historical inquiry, to be decided by historical authority, and we are ready to subject them to the same ordeal that we would any other works of equal antiquity. But, this done, we do claim, and certainly have a just right to claim, if the evidence be in their favor, if the voice of history go with them, that they shall be received for the same reason that we receive the works of Cicero, Tacitus, and Herodotus



## SECTION II.

### DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE.

1. It will not of course be necessary to enter into a lengthy argument, or to resort to quotations, to prove that the New Testament histories were in existence, and were ascribed to the authors whose names they bear, as early as the year 1000, because no man who has read at all will dispute this. We have already shown that the Christians took their rise at the commencement of the present era, and it must of necessity be seen that they would not continue through this long period without some kind of books; and this is confirmed by reference to the writings of that age in all parts of the world, which abundantly prove that the books in question were, at that time, generally known and read. We give the following notices, therefore, rather to keep up a continued chain of evidence from the present time to that of the Apostles, than because we think it is required.

2. 1836—1000. About the year 1600, our present English Translation of the Scriptures was made. Previous to this, LUTHER made his German translation. In the year 1300 LYRA wrote short comments upon the whole Bible. In the year 1200 CLARA, a Dominican monk, wrote a commentary upon the whole Bible. THOMAS AQUINAS also compiled in this century a Catena on the four Gospels, that is, notes collected from upwards of

eighty Greek and Latin fathers. In the early part of the twelfth century ZIGABENUS, of Constantinople, wrote commentaries on different parts of the Bible, and particularly upon the four Gospels. In the eleventh century ANSELM prepared notes or glosses upon the Bible; and the well-known THEOPHYLACT of Bulgaria, wrote Scholia on the principal books of Scripture, among which were the Gospels, Acts, and Paul's Epistles. This brings us to the year 1000.

3. 1000—600. In the tenth century ECUMENIUS wrote commentaries on the book of Acts, and on all the Epistles. In the ninth century lived STRABUS, who wrote commentaries upon the whole Bible, or perhaps collected them from those who had written before him. About the year 800 MAURUS flourished; he was a most voluminous writer, and has left, beside numerous comments, a glossary upon the whole Bible. In the eighth century, about 780, lived the venerable BEDE, who collected from the writings of the fathers, notes on most of the New Testament. If we go back to the beginning of the seventh century, we find the Christian history acknowledged by the famous MAHOMET, who recognizes Jésus Christ as a prophet, and affirms that he wrought miracles, was persecuted, condemned, &c. Beside this, he has borrowed largely from the New Testament, not only in doctrines and facts, but in words. BUSH has adduced twenty passages from the Koran, which are taken almost verbatim from the Christian Scriptures. More than this, he has sometimes borrowed, perhaps we might say extracted, whole relations, as in the case of John and Jesus, the account of whose birth is taken with very little alteration from the first chapter of Luke.\* At this date, then, 600, the books of the New

\* See Bush's *Life of Mahomet*, pp. 33—36.

Testament must have been in existence; otherwise, Manomet could not have copied from them.

4. 600—400. In the sixth century there lived a great number of ecclesiastical writers, both Greek and Latin, for an account of whom, and to avoid prolixity, the reader is referred to Mosheim. We give the names only of PROCOPIUS, of Gaza, who wrote an exposition of several books of Scripture; ARATOR, who translated the book of Acts into Latin verse; PHILOXENUS, the Syrian, who procured the New Testament to be translated into his own language; and VICTOR, of Capua, who collected notes on the four Gospels, which received the name of Victor's chain. In the fifth century also, there flourished many eminent writers, who have treated of the books of the New Testament. We shall mention one only, the celebrated AUGUSTINE. He was a laborious writer, and has left treatises upon the various books of the Old and New Testaments. He carries us up to the year 400. From this date we shall go upward to the time of the disciples and the Apostles more closely, or with shorter intervals; so that the nearer we approximate to the date of the Christian Scriptures, the stronger and more compact may be the chain of evidence.

5. 400—300.\* JEROME was born about the year 350, and composed most of his works between 380 and 400. He was a man of great industry, of extensive information

\* To avoid the inconvenience of constant reference, it may be well to state here, once for all, that the materials, from which the remainder of this section is made up, have been drawn, chiefly, of course, from Lardner's works, the general magazine to which all resort. Edit. 8vo. London, 1834. Also Horne, vol. i. Paley's Evidence, Part I. c. ix. Grotius de Veritate, lib. iii. Mosheim's Ecc. History, cent. i. ii. iii. iv. Townley's Introduction to Lit. Hist. of the Bible. An old work containing much matter of information, the title page of which runs thus—"Historia Rerum Memorabil-

acquired by travel, and was unquestionably the most learned of the Latin fathers. He lived a long time in Palestine, for the express purpose of acquiring all the knowledge to be had concerning the books of the New Testament.\* As the result of his researches he brought out several large works on the various subjects connected with them, and in these he notices all the books which we have at the present day. He attributes the four Gospels to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and mentions the Acts of the Apostles as another work of Luke. He says that Paul wrote Epistles to seven different churches, and these churches are the same with those whose titles we find in the present Epistles of Paul. He farther states that Paul wrote to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. The catholic Epistles as they are termed, he ascribes to Peter, James, John, and Jude, whom he calls Apostles. The Epistle to the Hebrews, he himself believes, was written by Paul, but adds, that most of the Latin Church were of a different opinion. In addition to these testimonies, Jerome was employed by the Bishop of Rome upon the Lat-

*iam in orbe gestarum, ab Anno Mundi usque ad Annum Christi MCXXV. Amstecedami, 1661.*" 2 vols. 4to. The author is one Timmannus Gesselius. Wake's *Apostolical Fathers*, and the *Histories of Eusebius, Evagrius, Socrates, &c.* in one folio. London, 1836.

\*"Jerome was the most eminent Biblical scholar of the fourth century. His father, Eusebius, who was a Christian, sent him to finish his education at Rome. In this city he perfected his knowledge of the Latin and Greek tongues, his native dialect being the Illyrican. Soon after his ordination he went into Palestine, and visited the principal holy places situated in different parts of that country, but made Bethlehem his usual place of residence. He had recourse to the ablest Jewish doctors, to inform himself of all the particulars relating to all the remarkable places mentioned in sacred history." He died in Palestine at the age of 90, A. D. 420. Townley's Intro. p 49.

in translation of the Scriptures, known by the name of the Vulgate Version, which is received to this day as the standard of the Catholic Church. The Gospels were completed in the year 384, and the other books followed in order.

6. We mention next **ATHANASIUS**, of Alexandria, whose testimony may be placed at about 340. He has given a catalogue of the books of the Old and New Testaments. "The books of the New Testament," says he, "are these: The four Gospels, according to Matthew, according to Mark, according to Luke, according to John. Then after them the Acts of the Apostles, and the seven Epistles of the Apostles called catholic: of James one, of Peter two, of John three, and after them of Jude one. Beside these there are fourteen Epistles of the Apostle Paul. The first to the Romans, then two to the Corinthians, after them that to the Galatians, the next to the Ephesians, then to the Philip-pians, to the Colossians, after them two to the Thessalonians, and the Epistle to the Hebrews; then two to Timothy, to Titus one, the last to Philemon: and again, the Revelation of John." This list, it will be seen, agrees with our present books of the New Testament.

7. Passing over the other ecclesiastical writers of this century, of whom there were more than *fifty*, we come to the famed **EUSEBIUS**, bishop of Cæsarea in Palestine, who flourished about the year 315. He was a man of great reading, versed in all the branches of the literature of that age, and justly celebrated for his profound knowledge of ecclesiastical history. He wrote in Greek a careful history of Christianity from its commencement to his own time, and laboriously examined all the Christian writings which preceded him, for the purpose of gathering the materials for his great work. He directed his researches particularly to the ascertaining what writings had been received as the genuine productions of the immediate dis-

ciples and Apostles of Christ; and to this inquiry has devoted four distinct chapters in one of his books. He divides the books of the New Testament into two classes, as the result of his investigations,—1. Those which were *universally* received from the beginning as the genuine works of the persons whose names they bear. These are, The four Gospels—The Acts of the Apostles—The Epistles of Paul—The first Epistle of John—The first Epistle of Peter. 2. Those which had not received universal assent. These are, The Epistle of James—The Epistle of Jude—The second Epistle of Peter—The second and third Epistles of John—The Revelation. Of these last, he says, it was doubted by some only whether they were really the productions of the Apostles, but the majority received them.\* This valuable testimony of Eusebius proves not only that all the books of the New Testament were in existence when he wrote, which was little more than two hundred years after the time of their date, as declared by Christians, but that they were in existence a long period anterior to this; because his evidence is the result of inquiries which he carried back to the very days of the Apostles. So that, in fact, this testimony of the great historian is not to be confined to his own day; it is more ancient than this, it carries us up to the very point in question. We might then with all propriety stop here, and consider our position established, until the authority of Eusebius' history is overthrown; and were we to wait till this is done, we should wait forever. But we do not wish to silence the unbeliever, we would rather convince him, and we will therefore go on our journey upward, furnishing him with line upon line of increasing proof.†

\* Does this look like a disposition to impose on his contemporaries, or on those of after times?

† The reader may be gratified to know that in this century, the fourth, there were made no less than ten distinct catalogues of the

8. 300—250. If we go back fifteen years from Eusebius to the first date here named, we shall find labored vindications of Christianity. In these works, composed by ARNOBIUS and LACTANTIUS, the authors avoid direct quotations from the Scriptures, because, as one of them states, they were writing to heathen, who knew nothing about them. Their object was to give those to whom they wrote, a general outline of the Christian history, in doing which they draw their accounts, without giving names, from the Gospels, with which they perfectly correspond. In the year 294, lived PAMPHILUS, presbyter of Cæsarea. He was remarkable for his great love of the Scriptures, and for his encouragement of learning and piety. He not only lent copies of the Scriptures to be read, but gave as presents to persons of known zeal, manuscripts transcribed with the greatest accuracy by his own hand. He established a library of several thousand volumes at Cæsarea, to be loaned out for reading. And it is a remarkable fact that there is a very ancient manuscript of Paul's Epistles, preserved in the French king's library, with the following note: "This book was compared with the copy in the library at Cæsarea, in the hand-writing of St. Pamphilus."

**Books of the New Testament, six of which agree exactly with our present canon, containing every book that we now have. One was by the third council of Carthage in the year 397,—one by Augustine, a bishop of Africa, in 394,—one by Jerome, in 392,—one by Rufinus, in 390,—one by Epiphanius, in 370,—and the last by Athanasius, already noticed, in 340. The remaining four agree with our list with the single exception of the book of Revelation. These catalogues of course prove, independently of other testimony, the existence of all the books of the New Testament as early as the given dates. It may be well to notice the distance from each other of the places at which these catalogues were made—one at Carthage in Africa, one at Jerusalem in Judea, one at Laodicea in Asia, one at Constantinople, in Europe, &c. Here are, at least, three different quarters of the globe, all bearing the same witness.**

Here we have proof of the existence of all the epistles of the Apostle Paul. From this we may go to VICTORIN, bishop of Pettaw, in Germany, who lived about the year 290, and whose testimony is the more valuable as he was at a great distance from the others. He acknowledges the existence of the Gospel histories, having written expositions of various portions of them. In his commentary upon Revelation, when he comes to the following passage—"The first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face like a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle," iv. 7, he explains it by reference to the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, of which he says these beasts were figures. We have nothing to do with this interpretation; but this reference shows that the Gospels were then written, and were in Germany. He also cites the Acts of the Apostles in his works, which proves the same thing with regard to this book. Besides Victorin, there were many other writers up to the year 250, whose works abound with quotations from, or reference to the Gospel histories, and whose testimonies are given at length by Dr. Lardner. We shall content ourselves, with naming some of them, with their dates, and places of residence—METHODIUS, Lycia, 290—THEOGNOSTUS, 282—ANATOLIUS, Laodicea, 270—DIONYSIUS, Rome, 259—NOVATUS, Rome, 251. To these we may add CYPRIAN, bishop of Carthage in Africa, who flourished about the year 250. "The Church," says he, "is watered like Paradise, by four rivers, that is, by four Gospels." He mentions the Acts of the Apostles repeatedly by name; and indeed his writings are literally filled with quotations from Scripture, proving the existence thereof beyond all question.

9. 250—200. GREGORY, of New-Cæsarea, and DIONYSIUS, of Alexandria, first present themselves within this period, and the quotations from the Gospel histories in



their works are very numerous ; but as they immediately followed the famous Origen, we pass them with this notice, and come to him. ORIGEN flourished about the year 230, and was unquestionably one of the most remarkable men that ever lived. He is known all over the civilized world for his profound erudition, his devoted study of the Scriptures, and his gigantic labors in connection therewith.\* His writings show the existence of all the books of the New Testament, in his day, the same as we have them now. In speaking of the histories of the Evangelists, he says, "The four Gospels are received without dispute by the whole church of God under heaven ;" and he then proceeds to give an account of their respective authors, attributing them, as do Christians of the present age, to Matthew Mark, Luke, and John. With regard to Luke he says, "he once more sounds the trumpet, relating the Acts of the Apostles." This is valuable testimony, because it is only about one hundred and thirty years from the Apostle John. Again, he says of the books of the New Testament, "They are not private books, or such as are read by a few only, and those studious persons, but they are books read by every body." This shows that they were generally known by friends and foes, for this was said in reply to one who had opposed Christianity. To produce all the quotations from Origen's works, in which he mentions or bears testimony to the Scriptures, or to repeat all his quotations from them, would be to transcribe nearly in full the Old and New Testament. "If we had all his works remaining," says Dr. Mill, "we

\* See notices of him in Mosheim, cent. iii. P. II. c. 2. Horne, vol. i. p. 80. ii. pp. 171, 742. Ancient Hist. of Universalism, c. iv. Townley's Bible Hist. pp. 53—56. Lardner's Credibility, Part II. c. xxxviii. where upwards of an hundred pages are devoted to an account of his writings, and to lengthy extracts from them.

should have before us almost the whole text of the Bible." From Origen to the year 200, there were several writers, among whom were HIPPOLYTUS, the fragments of whose works contain an abstract of the whole Gospel history; JULIUS AFRICANUS, who wrote upon the genealogy of Christ, as given by Matthew and Luke; AMMONIUS, who composed a Harmony of the four Gospels, in which he of course quoted the most of their contents; and CAIUS, who has made quotations from all the Epistles of Paul, with the exception of that to the Hebrews. These and many other writers, are crowded into the short space of thirty years. Thus far then, to the year 200, we are brought, not only with the Gospel histories, but with all the books of the New Testament, and at this point there is a mountain of evidence from a multitude of writers in their support.

10. 200—150. In entering the second century, we meet first with TERTULLIAN, a Latin father of considerable note. He was born in the year 160, and wrote about 190, and from that to 220. He quotes from all the books of the New Testament, except the Epistle of James, the second of Peter, and the second and third of John. He distinguishes Matthew and John as Apostles; and Mark and Luke as apostolical men—"Among the Apostles, John and Matthew teach us the faith; among apostolical men, Luke and Mark refresh it." He mentions also that their writings were received and acknowledged by the Christian churches from the commencement. "By all the apostolical churches and by all who fellowship with them is the Gospel of Luke received; and the same authority supports the other Gospels which we have from them; I mean John's and Matthew's; although that likewise which Mark published may be said to be Peter's, whose interpreter Mark was." This is in allusion to the fact that Mark was the companion of Peter, and probably wrote under his direction.

11. Such is a part of the testimony of Tertullian, given about 150 years from the time the books are said to have been written. Its value and importance are readily seen. He who lived so near the days of the Apostles, acknowledges the Gospel histories, and ascribes them to the same authors whose names they bear to this hour. And not only this, he declares that they existed long previous to this, and were received by the very churches founded by the disciples, and names those of Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Ephesus, established by Paul, that of Rome, by Peter and Paul, and those gathered by John. How irresistible then is this testimony, and how plainly does it show us the notoriety, and the wide circulation of these Gospels in Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor. The time that it would take to accomplish this distant distribution, and to enable Tertullian to learn the opinions of these different churches, almost necessarily carries us up to the Apostles.

12. Our author likewise speaks of the coincidences between the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's Epistles, which gave birth to that admirable work of Paley, the *Horæ Paulinæ*. To give any portion of the quotations which he makes from the Christian Scriptures, would be exceeding our bounds; let it suffice to repeat the words of Dr. Lardner, who says, that "there are perhaps more and larger quotations of the small volume of the New Testament in this one Christian author than of all the works of Cicero, though of so uncommon excellence for thought and style, in writers of all characters for several ages." How much stronger and more abundant, then, the evidence for the books of the New Testament, than that for any other ancient work, even the most famous! No one thinks of doubting that the works called Cicero's were really written by him; and yet in this single writer, Tertullian, we have more evidence for the genuineness and

truth of the New Testament, than three hundred years have given for the prince of Roman authors. How inconsistent then is that man who receives Cicero, and rejects Matthew.

13. The celebrated CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, or as he is usually called Clement of Alexandria, next claims our notice. He was the preceptor of Origen, and flourished about 186, and from that to 217, the date of his death. In the fragments of his works preserved by Eusebius, he gives an account of the four Gospels, and says that those containing the genealogies, Matthew and Luke, were written first; Mark's next, at the request of Peter's followers; and John's last. This account he informs us, he received from the early presbyters. This testimony of Clement comes to the same point with that of Tertullian, that the Gospel histories were in existence long prior to him, and were received as the works of those whose names they bear by all the churches. His quotations are numerous, and his confidence in these books may be seen in the following.—“That this is true, appears from hence, that it was written in the Gospel according to Saint Luke.” He rejects a passage which had been presented to him, for this reason,—“We have not this in the four Gospels delivered to us.” This shows us that the Scriptures were the only authority, and that there were four and only four Gospels acknowledged by these early Christians.

14. IRENÆUS was bishop of Lyons in France, and the testimony which we derive from him embraces the period between 170 and 180. It will be seen that there is an interest and importance in his evidence when it is stated, that there was but one step between him and the Apostles. He was the disciple of the venerable Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John. He was acquainted with many others who had seen and been instructed by the

immediate disciples of Christ. If he bears witness then to the genuineness of the Gospel histories, it would seem decisive, for he must have had it from those who knew the reputed authors, and must of course have known whether they were the real authors. Now he does give us this witness, he advances the most decisive testimony to all the books of the New Testament, with the exception of Paul's Epistle to Philemon, the third Epistle of John, and that of Jude; which containing no doctrinal matter, furnished him with nothing for the works in which he was engaged. He ascribes the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles to the same persons whose names they bear, gives us a brief notice of these authors, and the occasions of their writings. He extracts at length the particulars of Luke concerning Christ, which are not mentioned by the other Evangelists. He has collected from the book of Acts all the passages in which the writer is represented as accompanying Paul, which of course leads him to transcribe a large part of the latter half of the history. Speaking of the Evangelist, he says, "they first preached the Gospel, and afterward, by the will of God, committed it to writing, that it might be for a time to come the foundation and pillar of our faith." Again, he says, "Matthew then, among the Jews who wrote a Gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and founding a church there; and after their exit, Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter delivered to us in writing the things that had been preached by Peter; and Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon his breast, likewise published a Gospel while he dwelt at Ephesus in Asia." Beside this he quotes, word for word, thirteen of the Epistles of Paul, also those of James, Peter, and John, and the Apocalypse; examples from each of which are given

at length by Lardner. Here then we have the most explicit testimony with regard to the existence and authorship of the Gospel histories, Epistles, &c. by one who had conversed with those who had been taught by the disciples! Once more—he speaks of the universal agreement of the Christians of that age in regard to the doctrines of Christ. “The church though spread throughout the world, has but one faith—those in Germany, in Spain, among the Celts; those in the East, those in Egypt, and in Africa, and in all places, have one faith, as if they lived in one house; yea, they seem to have but one soul, one heart, and preach and teach as if they had but one mouth.”

15. For the sake of brevity, we omit a notice of the other writers of this period. Suffice it to say that Lardner has enumerated within these fifty years not fewer than *thirty*, some of whom were distinguished, and all of whom have quoted from, or abundantly acknowledged, the books of the New Testament. To these may be added the Epistle of the church of Lyons in France, to their brethren in Asia, containing a narrative of their cruel persecutions, in which they quote from the Gospels, the Epistles of Paul, Peter, and John, and from Revelation.

16. 150—100. The reader will see from this last date, that we draw near to the days of the disciples, for it was not till the year 100 that the Apostle John died. We meet first the renowned Justin, or as he is more frequently called JUSTIN MARTYR, from having sealed his profession with his blood. He became a convert to Christianity in the year 133, and wrote largely from the year 140 until he was put to death, about twenty-five years after. He was a man of great learning; he had studied all the popular systems of philosophy, and at last embraced Christianity as the only true philosophy.

He composed during the persecutions, two apologies for the Christians, one of which was presented to the emperor Antoninus Pius, the other to Marcus Antoninus and the Roman senate. He bears witness for the existence of the four Gospels in the following : " For the Apostles in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels have thus delivered it, that Jesus commanded them to take bread and give thanks." He farther says that these were publicly read in the assemblies of the Christians, with exhortations. After giving his opinion on a certain point, he adds—"As they have taught, who have written the history of all things concerning our Savior Jesus Christ." In the compass of a few lines he quotes from three of the Gospels—" And in other words he says, 'Depart from me into outer darkness, which the Father hath prepared for the devil and his angels.' And again he said in other words, 'I give unto you power to tread upon serpents, and scorpions, and venomous beasts, and all the power of the enemy.' And before he was crucified, he said, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the Scribes and Pharisees, and be crucified, and rise again the third day.'" Here are three quotations from the Gospels in succession ; the first from Matthew xxv, the second from Luke x, and the third from Mark viii.\* This testimony of Justin is valuable, proving—1. The existence of these books so near the time of the Apostles—2. That they were written by the companions of Christ—3. That they were publicly read and known.

17. We come next to PAPIAS, whose testimony embraces the period between the years 110 and 116, which brings him into close contact with John. He does not

\* Jones says, "He cites our present canon, and particularly our four Gospels, continually, I dare say above two hundred times." New and Full Method. Append, vol. i.

say, however that he was acquainted with him, or even saw him, but affirms that he received accounts from those who had seen him and the other Apostles, and listened to their teachings. "If I chanced," says he, "to meet with any elder or presbyter, who had conversed with the Apostles, I diligently inquired of him the sayings of the Apostles, what Andrew, what Peter, what Philip, and the other Apostles and disciples of the Lord had taught. For I desired to have the benefit not only of their books, but of the words which others had heard them speak."\* Here Papius informs us that writings from the disciples were then in existence; and on another occasion, he speaks of them in such a manner as to show that they were publicly and generally known. He ascribes the Gospels to Matthew and Mark, the names they bear now, and tells us in what language Matthew wrote, and the materials from which Mark gathered his history, which he says, was the preaching and information of Peter. From the diligent inquiries of Papias among those who were familiar with the disciples, it will at once be seen that his testimony is of the first importance, as he could not possibly have been mistaken with regard to the authorship of Gospel histories.

18. The next step will bring us into the immediate neighborhood of the disciples and Apostles—will introduce us to those who were familiar acquaintances and laborers with them. It will be evident, therefore, that if they give testimony to the existence of the Gospel histories, and allude to and quote them as authority, their genuineness is established beyond all question; for they certainly must have known, and that from the very mouths of these disciples, whether or not they were the authors

\* Those who please may read more in Eusebius lib. iii. chap. 39. Lardner, Works, vol. ii. pp. 216—125, and others.



of these histories. Let us proceed then to add the last link to the chain, by giving their testimony.

19. 100—33, the date of the death of Christ. POLYCARP was the disciple of the Apostle John, and received instruction from him concerning the religion of Christ, which of course throws his testimony as far back as the year 90, as John died about the year 100. His Epistle to the church at Philippi abounds with references to the books of the New Testament. Though the whole letter occupies no more than four small quarto pages, yet in this brief space there are ten or fifteen clear allusions to, and twenty-five distinct quotations from, the books mentioned. The principal quotations are from Matthew, Luke, Acts, the Epistle to the Romans, first and second to Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Ephesians, first to Timothy, first of Peter, and first of John. The exactness of his quotations is perfect, "Judge not, that ye be not judged—with what measure ye meet, it shall be measured to you again." Luke vi. 36, 38. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matth. v. 3. "He who confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is Antichrist." 1 John iv. 3. "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Matt. xxvi. 41. "We brought nothing into this world; we can carry nothing out." 1 Tim. vi. 7. These examples are sufficient to show that the Gospel histories were in existence at this age. And it is a strong argument in support of their general notoriety, that Polycarp does not name the books from which these quotations were taken, notwithstanding they are so numerous. This shows that they were books generally known at that time, and therefore that it was unnecessary to mention where the passages would be found. This is precisely as we do at the present day; in writing to a friend on a subject which should call for it, we quote the words, "Judge not that ye be not judged," without stopping or thinking

to name where they may be found, taking it for granted that the Bible is so generally known and read, that every one must know whence they came. This was the manner of Polycarp.

20. IGNATIUS was bishop of Antioch in the year 70, about thirty-seven years from the crucifixion, and of course was contemporary with the Apostles. In his Epistles, of which there are seven, he has distinctly alluded to, or quoted the Gospels of Matthew and John, the Acts and most of the Epistles. The following are examples—"The spirit knows whence it comes, and whither it goes." John iii. 8. "Christ is the door by which we enter in." This is from Christ's words in John x. 9. "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Again, "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as a dove." This is from Matt. x. 16.

21. Next appears CLEMENT of Rome. This was one of the companions of Paul, of whom he speaks in his Epistle to the Philippians, iv. 3. "With *Clement* also, and others my fellow-laborers, whose names are in the book of life." The Epistle which we have from Clement was in great repute among the first Christians, and so much was it admired by all, that it was publicly read in the churches. Irenæus, of whom we have before spoken, says, "It was written by Clement, who had seen the blessed Apostles, and conversed with them; who had their preaching still sounding in his ears, and their declarations before his eyes." He quotes from the books of the New Testament after the same manner with Polycarp; he does not name the book, but goes upon the presumption that those to whom he wrote were perfectly acquainted with the source from which the passages came; which shows us how well the books were known, and how faithfully they were read by the first Christians. His letter was addressed to the church of Corinth, and he tells them to

pay attention to the Epistles which Paul had written them. From the evangelical histories, or the Gospels, he quoted such passages as these—"Be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; as ye judge, so shall ye be judged; with what measure ye mete, with the same it shall be measured unto you." Again, he says, Remember the words of the Lord, for he said, "Wo to that man by whom offences come; it were better for him that he had not been born, than that he should offend one of my elect; it were better that a millstone should be tied about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the sea, than that he should offend one of my little ones." Here are direct quotations, word for word, from Matthew and Luke, which prove that these histories were written at that time.—Now, it must be evident that Clement knew whether these books were written by the disciples or not, and if they were spurious histories, or, in other words, if the companions of Christ were not the authors, then he would not surely have acknowledged them. He might have gone direct to Paul for information, had there been any doubt, and have satisfied himself. The fact therefore that Clement quotes them, and bears witness to their genuineness, is equal proof that they were acknowledged by Paul, otherwise Paul would have corrected him. It may not be out of place here to say, that there are points of striking resemblance in thought and diction, between Clement's Epistle and that to the Hebrews, which may perhaps be attributed to the fact that he was so much in the society, and heard so much of the preaching and conversation of Paul.

22. BARNABUS next calls our attention. He was also a fellow-laborer with Paul, and is frequently mentioned by him in his Epistles. Luke has also given us an account of his travels with Paul, as may be seen in Acts xiv. xv. He has given his testimony to the existence of the Gospel

histories by quotations from them, such as follows:—"Let us therefore beware lest it come upon us as it is written : There are many called, few chosen." Again, "Christ showed that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." It will be observed that Barnabas quotes these passages with the preface, *it is written*, showing thereby that the book from which it is taken was one of authority. This expression was in frequent use, and is indeed at this day employed in the same manner. We often say, when about to produce a passage from Scripture, "it is written," by which it is always understood that such passage is taken therefrom. We learn from it too, that the Gospel histories as early as the days of Barnabas, were generally known, and appealed to as authority. The same remarks made in relation to Clement apply equally here—Barnabas being constantly in Paul's company for several years, and often meeting the other disciples, must have known whether they wrote the books ascribed to them. Had they not been the authors, they would have denied them, and Barnabas instead of quoting them, would have repeated the denial. The evidence then is decisive ; the Gospel histories were written at that age, and the disciples of Christ were the authors.

23. We have now arrived at the end of the chain of evidence to be produced. We begun with our own day, and we have from this followed up the Gospel histories from year to year, until we have at last carried them to the very feet of the disciples of Christ. And now we would ask, Where is the man who would remove them from this ? Where is the man who can steadily look this mass of historical evidence in the face, and not blush to affirm that these books were written two or three hundred years after Christ ? Yea, where is he who would not blush to deny that they were written in the days and by the very hands of the disciples themselves ? The man who would deny

this, is bound to deny, if he would be consistent, the truth of all history—he should refuse to believe that such men as Alexander, Julius Cæsar, or Brutus lived, or performed the works attributed to them; he should reject the histories of Tacitus, which are not supported by half the evidence; and he should deny that Cicero ever wrote the Orations, or that Dion Cassius was the author of the histories which go in his name—yea, he should deny the genuineness of John Calvin's works, and affirm that they were written long after his time; and by the same rule should in twenty years from this time, or even now, reject the letters of Washington and the works of Franklin, and assert that they were forged years after their death. This is consistent, this is fair: we only ask him to treat all other history as he treats the Christian history; and this is surely a reasonable and proper request. If he believes that the *Æneid* was written by Virgil, and at the time stated, because this is the voice of all history, let him by the same rule believe that the Gospels were written by the disciples of Christ, and at the time stated.

24. But if he persists in refusing credit to the Gospel histories, we ask him to give a reason for it; we cannot take the broad unsupported assertion that they are not the works of the disciples, as proof that they are not; we must have something more than this. We have given him our reasons for believing that they are; we have produced an unbroken series of proof from our own day to that of the disciples, every part of which testifies to this fact. Now if he does not believe it, let him produce a like unbroken series of proof to the contrary. Let him begin at this date and go back, as we have done on the other side, with an array of historical evidence which shall testify at every step that these books were not written by the disciples—let him do this, (and we shall be satisfied with nothing less,) and we will then confess that

he has done something towards establishing his position. Or if, instead of establishing his own, he prefer to attack ours, let him place his finger upon that link in the chain of proof presented him, which he would strike out; and if he can prove a flaw, it shall be struck out. But let him remember that if he even accomplish this, he has done but little; the chain is broken indeed, but not destroyed, and he has yet to go back from this, and prove all the rest, one by one, to be false likewise, before his task is finished. Now neither of these has ever yet been done, and until one or both are done, we hold that it is established beyond dispute, that **THE GOSPEL HISTORIES WERE WRITTEN BY THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST.\***

\* We cannot deny ourselves the privilege of adding here the confessions of several noted Deists. *Chubb* admits that the books of the New Testament are the productions of the disciples and Apostles of Christ. *Hobbs* acknowledges that "the writings of the New Testament are as ancient as the times of the Apostles; and that they were written by persons who lived in those times, some of whom saw the things they relate." The celebrated *Lord Bolingbroke* says, "It is out of dispute that we have in our hands the Gospels of Matthew and John, who give themselves out as eye and ear witnesses of all that Christ did and taught." *Horne* i. 205. These men felt the force of historical evidence, and they knew too much to reject it. *Gibbon* may be added to their number.

*Note to this edition.*

Those who would see the question of the genuineness of the Gospels thoroughly discussed, exhausted and settled, must read Prof. *Newton's* work on that subject. I cannot suitably express my admiration of the work of this production, and of the satisfaction I have experienced in its perusal. It is a noble monument to the theological literature of our country, and one of which any country in christendom might be proud.

## SECTION III.

### EVIDENCE OF THE EARLY HERETICS.

1. A strong collateral argument for the genuineness of the Gospels is found in the controversies with the early heretics. In illustrating this point it will not be necessary to enter into the details of the various heresies of the second century, or to set forth particularly the divisions and subdivisions, or the several shades of opinion distinguishing one from the other. It will be sufficient for the purposes of the present argument to comprehend their followers all under the general name of Gnostics, without alluding to the minute differences in their multiplied speculations.

2. It is well known to every student of Christian history, that these heretics, so called, appeared in the church at a very early period, some of them even before the death of the Apostles. And the mixture of oriental philosophy and Christianity, and in some cases the extravagant and absurd doctrines, which they introduced into the church, excited the strongest opposition on the part of the orthodox or catholic believers. An open and uncompromising war was carried on against their speculations; and they were followed step by step in all their windings, and at many points hardly pressed; and at last virtually excluded from the church—many openly so, by direct ecclesiastical action of the ruling party.

3. It may be well to note the time of some of the more prominent of the leaders in these heresies. Basilides flourished about 112—125, and was of course in his early life contemporary with the Apostle John. Cerinthus became known about the commencement of the 2d century, and is even placed by Le Clerc as early as 80, or about ten years after the destruction of Jerusalem. Carpocrates lived and taught about A. D. 125—135, and Heracleon near the same time. Marcion, one of the most distinguished of this class, flourished about 130—145; and Valentinus still earlier than this. It will be seen that these men lived close to the time of the disciples, and some of them taught probably while John was still alive. Indeed Irenæus tells an anecdote respecting St. John and Cerinthus, which, whether true or false, shows that his heresy was well known before the death of John. Of course, this being the case, they had the opportunity of knowing whether the Gospels were really written by the disciples whose names they bear, or not. In the first half of the second century it must have been a well ascertained fact whether these histories of Christ proceeded from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; or whether they were spurious productions, legends or myths, unworthy of authority, passed off upon the church under the sanction of their names.

4. Now, as we have already noted, these heretics were oftentimes hard pressed in the argument with the orthodox party, and found it difficult, and impossible in some points, to reconcile their mystic notions respecting Christ with the simple statements of the Gospels.\* They turn to every

\* Sometimes however, judging from Tertullian's plea, they seem to have had the best of the argument. He thinks they ought not to be allowed to argue from the Scriptures. See Norton's *Genuineness of the Gospels*, ii. 350—359.



side, invent all sorts of explanations, and in the alembic of their metaphysics reduce to vapor the plainest language of the Gospel histories; but in all the discussion, however much defeated and beaten down, they never deny the genuineness of those histories.\* And what is very remarkable, some of them do deny the authority of the Gospels, at the same time they acknowledge their genuineness—i. e. they admit they were written by those whose names they bear, but they do not allow that their authors were infallible, and made no mistakes in their accounts of Christ's teachings and works. They maintained that Matthew, or Luke, or Paul, might have erred in their statements and opinions, but they did not pretend to deny that these men made the statements ascribed to them in the New Testament. They said the Apostles did not know every thing, and they were not bound to bow to their authority. The Marcionites, for example, contended that the evangelists were liable to errors, were influenced by their Jewish education and prejudices, and misunderstood Christ in many things; and hence their histories were not to be received without some allowance and correction. They accordingly rejected the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John, and selecting that of Luke, whom they considered as the most enlightened and the safest writer, they omitted what they regarded as errors, or what conflicted with their opinions; and so obtained what was looked upon by them as a correct history of the life and doctrines of Christ.

5. These facts seem to us to furnish one of the most satisfactory arguments for the genuineness of the evangelical narration. Is it possible to believe that these heretics, unscrupulous as they were respecting the authority of

\* I think Marcion's erasure of the name of Luke from his Gospel is hardly an exception to this statement.

the Apostles, would have hesitated for a moment, when pressed in argument, to have denied that the Gospels were written by the disciples, if there had been the slightest pretext for such denial? Would they have allowed their opponents to confute them, and overwhelm them with arguments drawn from books which had been forged in the name of the disciples, if they could have proved that they were forgeries? Would they have suffered themselves to be driven to such straits in the controversy by the statements of these books, when they might have set aside the whole difficulty by denying that the disciples wrote these books; which they could easily have proved had it been true? Several of them, as we have seen, might have put the question directly to St. John, whether he was the author of the Gospel passing in his name—whether the others were written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Had the answer been in the negative, they would not have used or argued from them at all; but would have answered all opposition from them, by simply denying that the disciples had any thing to do with them. This would have been a much less obnoxious course, than denying the authority of what they were obliged to acknowledge the actual statements and records of Christ's companions.

6. We urge, therefore, that the fact that these early heretics, bold as they were, did not deny that the Gospel history was written by the disciples, when, overpowered in the argument, they were so strongly tempted to it if there had been any apology for such denial, is conclusive proof, that they had not the least foundation for any suspicion of their genuineness. It is indubitable evidence that, at this early day, while John was yet alive, the evangelical narratives were universally allowed, by friend and foe, to be the productions of those whose names are affixed to them. For had there been the slightest ground for doubting the real origin of these books, we should surely had the Gnos-

tics throwing this back upon their orthodox opponents, when they found themselves worsted in the argument by passages quoted from these books. They would certainly have said, "Matthew never stated that"—"the Gospel you quote was not written by John, and we appeal to him in proof of what we affirm; he is alive and can answer for himself"—"the Gospel in Mark's name is a forgery, and we will not admit in argument any thing taken from it"—these, or some such declarations, we should have had from the early heretics, if they could have been put forward with any show of reason, with any hope of success. But nothing of the kind is seen or heard. They do not pretend to any such thing in reply to those who attack them with these weapons; but they endeavor, as we have said, to explain and defend their doctrines by showing their harmony with the Gospels, or by asserting outright that the evangelists were mistaken.

7. Such conduct, such a course of disputation on the part of these heretics, can only be explained on the ground that the question of the authorship of the Gospel histories had, at this early day, but one side to it; that there was not the least possible pretence for denying that they were really written by those whose names they bear to this day. And they had not only the reasons for denying already given, viz : the power of the arguments opposed to them, but also the arrogance with which they were treated by the orthodox party. Tertullian insolently says to them,— "You have no property in these books. Who are you? Whence do you come? What are you doing on my premises? Why do you cut down my woods, draw water from my springs, and sow and pasture on my farm? You are aliens. This is my possession. I have a title from the original owners. I am the legal heir of the Apostles." Now how easy it would have been for these aliens, or heretics, when taunted in this way, to have replied—

“Very good; keep your possession. It is not worth disputing about. As to your title from the Apostles, they never owned it themselves. They never had any thing to do with your possession. They never wrote, saw, or heard of the books you talk so pompously about.\*

8. If they *could* have answered in this way, they certainly would have done it. Not doing it, they show very plainly that they saw there was no hope of making any impression in that direction. At that period the subject admitted of no debate. There was but one opinion as to who wrote the Gospels, and the most reckless disputants never thought of opposing or denying it. Nothing, it would seem, can be more satisfactory on this point; or show more fully the certainty that the evangelical narratives are the genuine productions of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. If admitted by those whose interest it was to deny it, and who had the best means of knowing whether it was so or not, who were even partly contemporary with at least one of the reputed authors, and personally acquainted with him, as Cerinthus probably was—if these allow it without question or hesitation, when to deny it, if it could be done successfully, would give them a complete triumph instead of defeat, then there seems to be nothing more desired in the way of evidence. The point would appear to be beyond controversy.

\* De Præscript. Hæret. chapt. 37. cited in Norton, Pt. iii. chapt. xii. See also the whole subject treated in detail, as far as facts are concerned, in Lardner's History of the Heretics; works, vol. viii. pp. 290 and onward. Mosheim, Heresies of the 1st and 2d centuries, is not full on this point; and not always quite just perhaps.

#### SECTION IV.

##### HAVE THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BEEN CORRUPTED?

1. As there has been much said in relation to the question which stands at the head of this section, we have thought it might be proper, and acceptable, to give it a brief consideration. The assertion has often been made by the enemies of the Christian faith, that the Scriptures of the New Testament have been so much corrupted, that it is now altogether impossible for us to tell what was, and what was not, written by the disciples of Jesus. And suppose, instead of replying to this, we pronounce it mere assertion, as with all propriety we might, and, according to the rules of argument, call upon the unbeliever for proof? What would be his answer? He *says* the books of the New Testament have been greatly corrupted. We desire the evidence of this; let him point to any particular portion, as being of this character, and by an appeal to the authority of history prove his assertion, and so far as that portion is concerned we will submit. It is not enough to say that they *may* have been corrupted, he must prove to a demonstration that they *have been* corrupted. This is what he requires of us in regard to all our positions, and he ought not to shrink from his own rule.

2. We are not disposed to stop here, however, though in justice we might do it. With many, who are not in

the habit of thinking closely in these matters, the assertion in question has passed in its full extent as undoubted truth ; and the many attempts made to show its probability from circumstances, have tended to strengthen the conviction. There has been much declamation about the ambitious designs of an aspiring priesthood ; the ignorance of the people ; the darkness of the middle ages ; the scarcity of copies of the Scriptures ; and many other like particulars, for the purpose of giving an air of plausibility to the supposition. And it is through this studied mixture of a little truth with much error, this skillful blending of well known historical facts with speculations and false inferences, that not a few, who do but skim over the surface of things, have been led into the conclusion that the New Testament is too much altered and corrupted to be trusted.

3. In the observations to follow we shall endeavor to point out some particulars which will show the weakness of this position, and the utter impracticability of the supposed corruption. In the first place, then, it is well known that the original manuscripts or autographs of the writers, or at least some of them, were preserved for many years after their death. Ignatius appealed to them in the first century, and in the second century Tertullian affirms that they were carefully preserved in the Christian churches, and urges those who are curious in such matters to go and see them.\* And yet later than this they are appealed to by Peter, bishop of Alexandria, in the fourth century. It will of course be admitted that while these autographs were in existence, all corruption was of necessity pre-

\* "——percurre Ecclesias Apostolicas, apud quas ipse adhuc cathedræ Apostolorum suis locis præsidet, apud quas ipse authenticæ literæ acrum recitantur." Cited by Grotius, *De Veritate* l. iii. § 2.

vented, because, in case any had been attempted, they would have been brought forward and have ended the matter at once. All attempts, therefore, at corruption must be assigned to a period posterior, or at least, to the year 350, which grants more than can be justly asked, that these autographs may have been destroyed immediately after the death of Peter.

4. To the above consideration, we have to add, that before the year 350, copies of the Bible, and especially of the New Testament, had been greatly multiplied.\* And

\* Eusebius informs us that he himself was ordered to provide FIFTY BIBLES, at the public expense, for different churches. It was thought that the reader might be interested in the perusal of the following letter, written more than 1500 years ago by Constantine, the emperor, to Eusebius in relation to these Bibles.

“VICTOR CONSTANTIUS MAXIMUS, AUGUSTUS TO EUSEBIUS.”

In that City which bears Our Name [Constantinople] by the assistance of God our Savior's Providence, a vast multitude of men have joined themselves to the most holy Church. Whereas, therefore, all things do there receive a very great increase, it seems highly requisite that there should be more churches erected in that city. Wherefore do you receive most willingly that which I have determined to do. For it seems fit to signify to your prudence, that you should order FIFTY COPIES OF THE DIVINE SCRIPTURES, (the provision and use whereof you know to be chiefly necessary for the instruction of the church) to be written on well prepared parchment, by artificial transcribers of books, most skillful in the art of accurate and fair writing; which [copies] must be very legible and easily portable in order to their being used. Moreover, letters are dispatched away from our Clemency to the Rationalist of the Diocesis, [an officer of the province] that he should take care for the providing of all things necessary in order to the finishing of the said copies.—This therefore shall be the work of your diligence, to see that the written copies be forthwith provided. You are also empowered, by the authority of this our letter, to have the use of two public carriages, in order to their conveyance. For by this means, these which are transcribed fair, may most commodiously be conveyed even to our sight; to wit, one of the Deacons of your church being em-

this should be carefully noticed, as it will be seen by every one, that the difficulty of corrupting the Greek manuscripts must have increased with every increase of their number. Now it is a well-known fact that the books of the New Testament have been transcribed, beyond all comparison, more frequently than the works of any ancient classic author, however popular. Upwards of three hundred and fifty manuscripts were examined by Griesbach for his critical edition of the Greek Testament, some of which were more than twelve hundred years old.—They were not all entire; some contained only the Gospels, others the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, others the Epistles only, and others all but the Apocalypse.† From the multiplication of these copies, therefore, the difficulty of corruption would amount almost to an impossibility.

5. The reverence with which the Christians regarded those books, is a strong presumptive argument against the possibility of corruption. Their attachment to them was truly remarkable in some instances. “Women wore them in a volume hanging at their necks. Most persons carried it about them constantly. Some even washed their hands before they allowed themselves to take it for reading. And many have been found buried with the Gospel lying upon their breasts. Children were trained up from their infancy to repeat it by heart.” Eusebius mentions many examples of persons who had committed to memory the whole or parts of the Bible. Among others, one *Valens*,

ployed in the performance thereof. Who, when he comes to us, shall be made sensible of our bounty. God preserve you, Dear Brother.” Eusebius’ Life of Constantine. Eusebius informs us that he obeyed the order of the emperor, and sent him the “volumes magnificently adorned.”

† Horne’s Intro. vol. i. 116—118.



a deacon of Jerusalem, is said to have been above all others conversant in the Divine writings, so that he could repeat on occasion passages in any part of Scripture, as readily and correctly as if he had unfolded the book and read them. He also mentions *John*, an Egyptian, who could recite whole books at a time, and would, if necessary, repeat the Law of Moses, or the Prophetical parts of Scripture, or those of history, or the Letters of the Apostles. It would seem that such a reverence and love for the Sacred Books would effectually prevent the Christians from corrupting them. Men are not wont to abuse what they respect, and if ever respect and affection for any writings existed, it was surely manifested in such examples as those given. Under these circumstances and the influence of these feelings, let it be asked if there was much danger of corruption or alteration?

6. But even passing this over, and, for the sake of trying the question, admitting that the reverence of the Christians for the Scriptures was not sufficient to have prevented corruption, if they were disposed to it, there are still difficulties in the way which cannot be removed. Suppose the people had undertaken to alter them so as to favor their wishes in some way. How soon would they have been detected by the priests, and their wickedness been brought to light. The people, therefore, could not have effected this object, had they designed it. If corrupted, then, the priests must have done it. But here we have the same difficulty, for had they attempted it, the people would have detected them, and have exposed the unholy fraud. So that in either case the design would have been frustrated. But we will concede yet more.

7. Suppose it possible that the priests might have succeeded, not once only, but to any extent desired, in corrupting the New Testament, is it probable they would have left it in its present state? Why did they not alter

it in such a way as to aggrandize themselves, to acquire wealth and power by its sanction? Why did they not strike out such passages as these—"A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, nor covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." Why, if they were bad enough to corrupt the Scriptures, why did they not away with these commands, and substitute in their place that which would give them full permission to have as many wives as they pleased, to inebriate themselves when they chose, to quarrel, to get filthy lucre and power in any and every way they could? These are questions, which must be answered by him who affirms that the priests have corrupted the New Testament to suit their own purposes. And when he has disposed of these he will find many more as difficult, and which it will cost no little labor to answer in accordance with this favorite assertion.

8. This argument seems to us to have some weight, for it is evident that if the priests, as they are termed, had had the disposition and the opportunities for altering the Scriptures, they would have left out many passages now contained in them which command the strictest obedience, humility, sobriety, and chastity on their part; while with equal strictness they forbid all ungodliness and worldly lusts, all desire for riches and power, and every thing that is inconsistent with entire devotion to the moral and spiritual interests of those with whom they are connected as teachers. The fact therefore, that the books of the New Testament abound with exhortations and restrictions of this character, is, in our view strong and decisive proof that they have not been corrupted by priestcraft, but that we have them as they came from the hands of their auth-

ors. We cannot but add here, that this circumstance weighed so heavily with a noted opposer of Revelation, that he makes the following candid confession :—"I am persuaded the ecclesiastics did not falsify the Scriptures ; because if they had an intention so to do, they would surely have made them more favorable to their power over Christian princes, and civil sovereignty than they are."\*

9.. We come now to the consideration of other particulars, in proof that the New Testament could not have been corrupted. Soon after the death of the Apostles, there rose up in the church many heretics, as they are called, who endeavored to create sects and divisions among the Christians, which they succeeded in effecting to a considerable extent. Indeed there were such in the days of the Apostles. Paul, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, speaks of one of this sort ; and the author of Revelation, in the second chapter, twice mentions the Nicolaitanes, who were the followers of one Nicolas who had led them away from the purity of Apostolical teaching. Cerinthus also, who was contemporary with John, was the leader of another sect which had departed from the truth. These sectarian leaders, and their parties and divisions, greatly increased after the disciples had been removed from the scene of their labors. The Valentinians, the Marcionites, and the Donatists, with other sects half Christian and half Pagan, were powerful parties. These were continually exciting controversies on doctrinal points, and were always opposed by the orthodox Christians. It will be seen that it was utterly impossible, divided as they were to have altered the Scriptures, to have taken out or inserted any thing in their own favor or against their antagonists. The

\* Hobbes, cited by Horne from Leland's *Deistical Writers*, v. 1. p. 58.

moment this should have been attempted by either party, the other would have exposed it, and seized upon the circumstances to injure their cause. To show the truth of this it is only necessary to refer to facts. These attempts were made by Valentinians, and more especially by Marcion, the head of one of the sects mentioned.— They sought to prop up their cause by altering several passages in their copies of the Scriptures, but the fraud was immediately discovered by their opposers, and they were held up to merited reproach for their impious daring.

10. If we come down to the middle of the fourth century, we shall find the commencement of that great division of the Christians into eastern and western churches, which continues to this day under the names of the Greek church and the Roman, or Roman Catholic church. From this date, all corruptions were of course at an end, because the moment one of these parties had interpolated, or in any way changed aught of the New Testament, the other would have exposed them with triumph. They were very hostile to each other, (shame to their profession) and would not have suffered any thing of this kind to have passed without notice, yea, they would have received a bitter satisfaction in lashing one another for any design or attempt of this nature. Suppose, for the sake of illustration, that the believers in the final holiness and happiness of all mankind should undertake, at the present day, to insert in the Gospels or Epistles of the New Testament a passage in support of their doctrine, or to strike out one which they thought militated against it—how long would this remain undiscovered, how long would it be before their opposers would detect and expose the fraud? And on the other hand, should those who believe in the endless punishment of the wicked attempt a similar corruption in behalf of their doctrine, would they not be exposed with

equal avidity? And in either case what a tremendous outcry would be made against the guilty party! Well, this is a perfect fac-simile of the situation and feelings of the early Christians, and shows plainly the utter impossibility of corrupting the Scriptures in any respect by any party or class of Christians whatever.

11. We have not yet done; the difficulties mentioned thus far have all been within; we shall mention now one or two from without. The first is, that had the Christians, priests and people of all parties, been agreed to alter or corrupt the books of the New Testament, they nevertheless could not have done it without detection. Had any thing of the kind been attempted, the Jews who hated Christians and Christianity with a perfect hatred, and were watching all their actions and movements, with an intense and malicious interest, would at once have opened upon them a storm of furious invective and reproach.— They would have exulted in the detection and exposure of any fraud of this character, because it would have served them finely in their opposition to the religion of the despised Nazarene, and they would have made much of it in charging home upon his followers dishonesty and imposture.

12. While thus watched on the one hand by the Jews they were equally closely beset by the Heathen on the other. Among these, as has already been noticed, they had many very acute and learned adversaries, who had exerted themselves to the uttermost in their opposition to the Christian religion. They brought forward all manner of accusations against its believers, charging them with the foulest actions, and the most abominable crimes. And had they attempted to alter their sacred books, this would have been greedily seized by these men and hurled in their faces. And these adversaries were not ignorant of the Scriptures of the New Testament; Porphyry in particu-

lar was thoroughly acquainted with them from beginning to end, as his writings show, and would have quickly discovered any attempt at corruption.\*

\* It is proper to introduce the accusation of Celsus at this point. His words are, "Some of the believers, as if they were drunk, alter the Gospel three, and four, and many ways; that when pressed hard, and one reading is confuted, they may disown that, and flee to another." Lardner, *Heathen Testimonies*, chapt. xviii. 3.

1. This is a general charge, without any specifications. No such alterations are pointed out, which surely would have been done, had Celsus known such. For if he had done this, it would have destroyed confidence in these records, which would have been the deadliest blow he could have struck at the Gospels. As he offers no proofs, it is a fair conclusion that he had none to offer.

2. Celsus lived only twenty-five years after the Apostle John. While he lived such corruptions would not have been attempted; and it is hardly likely such repeated alterations, as this charge of Celsus asserts, could have taken place in the few years between himself and John, without some others hearing of it, and talking of it. But there is nothing in history making any allusion to it, nor do any other of the enemies of Christianity make such charge. Celsus is alone in the accusation, which could not be the case, if the alterations had been as extensive and frequent as he charges.

3. Origen in his reply gives the charge no importance, which he would have done had it been true. He would have been forced to meet it at length, and in detail. But he disposes of this serious accusation in a few sentences, saying, he does not know what Celsus means, unless he refers to the heretics Marcion and Valentinus, and perhaps Lucanus, and their followers (see paragraph 9.); as he knows of no others who had dared to alter the Gospels; and these corrupted only their own copies, which were not acknowledged by the church or Christian community. Now had this charge, so fatal if true, been grounded on facts, Origen would not have disposed of it in this way, especially since he gives a labored reply to charges far less important.

4. Notice also Celsus uses the expression "*some of the believers.*" He does not accuse the Christians generally, or as a body, but only "*some*" of them; which seems to confirm Origen's supposition, that he refers to certain sectaries or heretics, whom of course a Pa-

13. We would ask the candid Infidel if he would suffer the Christians of the present day to corrupt the Scriptures in any respect without exposure? Suppose they were to add a passage in the way of explanation to some imagined difficulty, or to interpolate some new doctrine, or to erase any portion on which unbelievers had raised objections—would these unbelievers leave it unnoticed? would they fail to discover and expose the fraud? Surely not, it would soon be brought into the light, and they would charge the Christians with the deception, and warn others against trusting them or their books. The Infidel will admit, then, for his own shrewdness sake, that it cannot be done now, and in this he virtually admits that it could not have been done at the time in question; for the primitive Christians were situated in this respect exactly as are Christians of the present day. They were watched and opposed by the Jews on the one hand, and the Pagans on the other, and they knew it; so that it was impossible, had they been ever so much disposed, to have interpolated, altered, or in any way corrupted their books without exposure, and consequent condemnation to themselves, their books, and their religion.

14. There is one other fact which, were there no oth-

gan, not entering into theological niceties, would not be likely to distinguish from the orthodox Christians.

5. It is also possible that Celsus might have noticed the difference in the narratives of the four Evangelists, and made this the ground of his vague and general charge. But how ever this may be, it is plain the statement is too indefinite to admit of refutation, as no instances or specifications are given for comparison and argument. And it is also plain that those on the spot, at the time, knowing all the circumstances, did not attach any importance to the charge; inasmuch as it does not appear that it was urged by the enemies, or replied to by the friends of Christianity; except in the case in review.

ers, would be sufficient of itself to show that the New Testament writings could not have been corrupted without discovery. It has already been stated that soon after they were composed, translations of them were made into various languages, and copies of these were scattered far and near through Europe, Asia, and Africa. Now suppose, which is itself an impossibility, that all the Greek copies could have been altered, still this would have effected nothing, because the various versions which had been spread abroad would have contained the authentic account,\* and have exposed the fraud which had been committed. Let us again resort to illustration. Take, as an example, the constitution of the United States, and consider for a moment the difficulties attending an attempt to corrupt this in regard to Slavery, either for or against, by altering all the copies of it which are distributed through the country! The bare thought shows its impossibility. But suppose, farther, that this instrument was translated into the French, German, Spanish, and Russian languages, and copies of these translations dispersed through their respective countries, and then consider the additional, the insuperable obstacle in the way of altering or corrupting. It will be seen that if it was accomplished in this country, the European versions would still remain un-

\* An instance of the great care taken to prevent corruption, is given in the celebrated Syriac manuscript brought from India by Dr. Buchanan, to whom it was presented by Mar Dionysius, the then, 1808, bishop of the Syrian Christians. It is written on parchment, in large folio, and the *words are all numbered* throughout the copy. Had any alteration been made in transcribing from this, it is easy to see how quickly it would have been detected. This manuscript had been in the hands of Syrian Christians nearly a thousand years. Buchanan's *Sermon, Star in the East*, p. 193, note. *Christian Researches* pp. 167, 168.



touched, and would be brought forward to expose the treachery. Apply this to the Gospel constitution, or the New Testament, and the utter hopelessness of any attempt at falsifying it will at once be demonstrated. And that no such attempt has ever succeeded, if made, is proved by the fact that all the manuscripts and versions agree in telling precisely the same story; and their uniformity in this respect, scattered as they are, over so wide a space, and in so many languages, is truly astonishing, and shows the veneration in which they have been held by Christians in all ages.

15. As a certain proof that the New Testament has not been corrupted, or that it is now what it was in the beginning, we refer to the fact that all the early writers quote the contents in the same language, and mention all the great events of the history in the same words that are found in these books at the present day. And it has been said that were the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament entirely lost, we might collect almost a complete copy of them from the commentaries and other writings of these ancient authors, so numerous are their quotations. This is unquestionably true in relation to the Gospels, for the works of these early fathers abound with, not only quotations, but in some cases very lengthy extracts from these books. Indeed, a perfect history of Jesus Christ might be gathered from Celsus, who has been mentioned as a violent opposer of Christianity in the year 176. He mentions all the great events of his life, which he took from the four Gospels, and in many instances descends to particulars, all which are the same events and particulars found in our present histories.\* These facts

\*See ch. viii. §1. paragraph 6 of this work, where the particulars are given.

show very clearly that the New Testament has not been altered, but that it is to all intents and purposes the same volume which was in the hands of the first Christians and their opposers, containing the same accounts that it did when first written.

## SECTION V.

### VARIOUS READINGS—THEIR CHARACTER, AND THEIR RELATION TO THE INTEGRITY OF THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

#### INTERPOLATIONS—HOW DETECTED.

1. In the preceding section we have endeavored to show, that the books of the New Testament have not been corrupted or altered, so as to affect any essential portion of the text, or render doubtful or obscure any point of faith or practice. This being established, it seems just and proper to devote some space to the subject of “various readings,” and the few known additions to the text, that it may be seen these do not conflict with the argument of that section.

2. The number of various readings amounts, perhaps, to over one hundred thousand. More than three-fourths of these are to be set aside from the discussion at once; first, because they are found in so few authorities, many in only a single manuscript or father; and second, because it is perfectly easy to explain their origin. And the remainder, with the exception of a very few, are entirely unimportant as respects either criticism or faith. They consist of different spellings of the same word; different tenses of the same verb, or cases of the same noun, not affecting the sense; omission or addition of particles, as *and*, *for*, *if*, *as*, *so*, &c; a change or omission of marks

or accents; insertion or omission of an article, or a word, or a letter; interchange of the singular and plural, where either is correct, a substitution of a word for its equivalent or synonym; the transposition of words; the change of a capital for a small letter, a compound word for a simple, or a proper noun for the corresponding pronoun; the change of "Jesus" for "Christ," or the addition of one to the other; &c. &c.

3. Now it is easy to see how such readings or differences might be multiplied, by a close examination of even a dozen manuscripts of any considerable work. But these various readings of the New Testament are the results of repeated minute study and comparison of one hundred and fifty manuscripts, some containing all, and some part of the New Testament books; of all the ancient versions, Lyriac, the earlier and later Latin, Ethiopic, Arabic, Coptic, Armenian, Gothic, Saxon, &c; of all the Greek and Latin fathers for a period of five hundred years or more! Is it very strange that, with such an extended and protracted ransacking of every "hole and corner" of the earth, there should be found many thousands of such slight variations or differences as we have named? So far from this, it would be wonderful, considering the carelessness of transcribers, and the multitude of copies, if it were not exactly as we find it. And if it were not so, the New Testament would be an exception to all other ancient books. And this brings me to say, what is kept out of sight by those who make so much talk about the various readings of the New Testament, viz: that the same thing is equally true of other ancient works, before the discovery of printing; and indeed since too, as will be found on examination.

4. Take Terence as an example, whose text is in as pure condition probably as any of the old classics. Bentley says, "I have seen twenty thousand various lesions

(readings) in that little author, not near so big as the whole New Testament; and am morally sure, that if half the number of manuscripts were collated for Terence with that niceness and minuteness which has been used in twice as many for the New Testament, the number of the variations would amount to fifty thousand." The same writer says that the edition of Tibullus by Broukhuijs, shows as many readings as there are lines; and adds a like remark of Plautus edited by Parens. Of course poetry is less liable to alterations than prose, because the measure prevents it, where the transcriber is not irredeemably careless and stupid. Again, Bentley says, "I have examined several manuscripts of the poet Maevius, and can declare that the variations I have met with are twice as many as all the lines of the book!"

5. I remarked that these variations were not confined to manuscripts only, or to the period prior to printing. The edition of Lucretius by Wakefield, shows, by a rough summary of the table at the end, a collection of about *twelve thousand* variations of the text, collected from only *five printed copies*; and this exclusive of differences in spelling, which makes so considerable a portion of the various readings of the New Testament! An edition of Longinus on the Sublime, a work about the size of Mark's Gospel, gives three thousand readings from only *eight* manuscripts and two printed editions. Bekker furnishes about seven hundred and eighty closely printed octavo pages of variations from his text of Plato, making considerable more than *sixty thousand*; and these gathered from an average of *thirteen* manuscripts.\* When, therefore,

\* See Norton's *Genuineness of the Gospel*, vol. i. Additional Notes, A. Sect. iii. He quotes from Bentley on "Free Thinking." Gerard in his *Institutes* has given an excellent summary of the sources and kinds of various readings, Part II. chapt. i. pp. 211—

we consider the large number of manuscripts of the New Testament, amounting to several hundreds; and add to these the manuscripts of numerous versions, and the quotations from the Greek and Latin fathers for several hundred years, citing from memory as many of them did—how this question of various readings, about which so much has been said, dwindles into smallest possible dimensions; and leaves untouched the argument of the previous section.

6. It remains to speak of *Interpolations*, or additions to the text of the New Testament. In a few instances this has been done accidentally; and possibly, in one or two cases, intentionally, with or without evil design. But the facility with which such addition may be detected by the difference in style, break in the narrative, the witness of manuscripts, versions, &c, forbids the possibility of important alterations. A single example will illustrate this. I select, as the most remarkable of the kind, the passage known as 1 John v. 7. This is undoubtedly an interpolation, as the following facts will show; while they will at the same time, unfold to the reader the method or process of discovering these additions.

269. It is easy for any one who writes to explain much of this. For example omitting the cross of the *t*, *tone* becomes *lone*, and *tame* *lame*, &c. A slight carelessness in making the *s*, and *sight* becomes *right*, or *night*. A hair line added to the *c* makes *ear* of *car*, or *eat* of *cat*; and *wail* is easily made *mail*. A slight flourish at the end of the *t* converts *hat* into *hate*; and it is easy to see how *note*, *vote*, *rote* may be mistaken one for the other. The lower part of *B* written faintly becomes *P*, and *u* in the same way becomes *v* or *r*; and we can readily see how *g*, *y*, *q* may be interchanged, and *k* taken for *h*, *d* for *a*, *m* for *n*, &c. In this very manuscript I was sometime puzzled by mistaking "show" for "slow," in consequence of faintly writing the lower part of the *h*. The reader should write out these examples rapidly, for illustration.

Before proceeding farther, it may be well to sum up the results of the present chapter.

1. In the first section it was proved by the authority of unbroken historical evidence that there were Christians eighteen hundred years since, and that they derived their origin, name and religion, from Jesus Christ, who lived and taught at that period in Judea, and was there crucified by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor.

2. In the second and third sections it was proved by the same authority, that the sacred writings of the Christians, or the books of the New Testament, were written by the companions and Apostles of Jesus Christ.

3. In the fourth and fifth sections it has been proved that these books have not suffered from any alterations, and therefore, that they contain the same histories and doctrines now, which they contained when they came from the hands of their authors.

It remains now to ascertain whether these histories are true, whether they are a faithful record of actual events. To this question we shall give attention in what follows.

## CHAPTER VII.

### INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL HISTORY.

#### SECTION I.

#### ARGUMENT FROM THE CHARACTER OF THE RELIGION AND OF ITS AUTHOR.

1. IN the farther prosecution of our inquiries we shall go forward in the strength of the position already established. It will be kept in mind by the reader that there is to be no more question with regard to the genuineness or authorship of the books of the New Testament; this question is to be considered as settled, until the unbeliever is enabled to sweep away the authority of the whole body of classical literature, and the very foundation of all political history. When he succeeds in doing this, when he succeeds in convincing the present generation that they know nothing of other days and other men—then, and not till then, can he affect the fact already demonstrated, that the Gospel histories were written by the disciples, the companions of Jesus Christ. The only remaining question, then, to be answered, is this: Are the Apostolical or Gospel histories authentic? or, in other words, are



they a relation of facts ? This established, and our work is done.

2. An argument of much weight in evidence of the truth of the Christian histories, is found in the character and objects of that religion of whose origin they give an account. There is an excellency, a sublimity and perfection in this religion, which the wisest of that age in which it was brought forth were utterly incapable of conceiving. Its revelations, its principles and precepts, are as far above the dreams, the wild and absurd speculations of the philosophers as the heavens are above the earth. Where is there any thing in the whole range of heathen philosophy and learning that will compare with the views presented in the New Testament of the attributes and purposes of God, of his moral government, and of the creation and destinies of the human family ? Where among the philosophers and sages of antiquity, will you find a system of morality as pure, as elevated, as perfect as that laid down by the Gospel writers as delivered to them of their master ? Indeed, the whole body of Pagan wisdom and morality might be brought together, and all that is good from each taken to form a system of faith and practice, and it would then, compared with the New Testament, be but a taper's ray to the brightness of the meridian sun. This will appear to the satisfaction, we may say, of any one who will apply himself with a candid mind to an examination of the subject.

3. The Christian Scriptures present us with a God who is a Spirit, and seeketh only such to worship him as worship him in spirit and truth ; a God who is immortal, invisible, and unchangeable—whose power is omnipotence, whose wisdom is omniscience, whose presence pervades all space, and whose goodness is as boundless as his own existence ; a God who created the heavens, and earth, and seas—who is the Father of all spirits, of whom, through

whom, and to whom are all things. Is there not a grandeur in these conceptions with regard to the Deity which infinitely surpasses the low and degrading views which the heathen entertain respecting their numerous gods? And what with regard to his worship? These Scriptures assure us that it does not consist in sacrifice, but in the affections, in the endeavor to make ourselves like unto him—wise because he is wise, just because he is just, good because he is good, and holy because he is holy. How far this, beyond the offerings of gold and silver, of wine, and flour, and slaughtered bullocks, and human blood, which characterized the worship of the Pagan deities! And whence came this superiority of the Christian faith. How is it that this should have been so much more spiritual and refined? How is it that a few poor fishermen and mechanics of Judea should have presented the world with a religion so far exalted above all that the sages of Egypt, and Greece, and Rome, ever produced? We press the question—How is it that these obscure and unlettered men could have conceived a religion so ennobling in its views of the Supreme Being, a religion simple enough for the humblest, and sublime enough for the loftiest minds? *Such* mechanics, *such* fishermen, never lived before, and have not surely lived since.

4. There is one other feature which may be briefly sketched, as manifesting the superiority of the religion of Jesus Christ—the free, the generous and universal character of its principles and precepts. And here again the life and the religion are in harmony, and together rise up above all that belongs to earth. There is nothing in the spirit and character of this extraordinary being, that belongs to the age in which he lived, or indeed to the present age. He has none of the prejudices or partialities, none of the weakness and littleness of those around him.

His great soul, his free heart, cannot be chained down to the boundaries of sects, or names, or nations. His country is the world, his countrymen the human race. He loves mankind, all of them, with a deep and earnest love, which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown. They may persecute him, oppose him, crucify him; but for all this, he loves them, and will not let them go without a blessing. And like this, is his religion. All its teachings and commandments, all its hopes, and promises, and doctrines, and revealings, are for the world, for all nations, and sects and conditions of men. There is nothing about it of narrowness or selfishness. It prostrates in the dust all divisions and distinctions, whether growing out of political, civil, or religious causes. It acknowledges none of the self-constituted ranks of society or of sectaries. It knows no man as master or slave, as high or low, as rich or poor, as Jew or Gentile. It admits but one name, that of *man*, and recognizes but one rank, that of *brethren*. This is its great, its holiest feature—that it would do away all that alienates man from his fellow-man, that contracts his sympathies, and smothers the free wishes of the generous soul—while, on the other hand, it would make men everywhere to feel that they are all members of one mighty family, whose father is God, that their hopes and joys and interests are one, and that they are journeying onward to a common home, and should cheerfully bear each other's burthen by the way.

5. Is a human being in want or distress? Relieve him. Does he deny the being of God, and sneer at the religion of Jesus? Is he a worshiper of the sun? Is he a follower of Juggernaut? Be it so—he has greater claims upon thee than these can outweigh. Is he ignorant? Instruct him, make him wise unto life and salvation. Is he vicious and depraved? For all this, he is thy brother; labor with him, plead with him, save him from the fatal

influences which are destroying him. Is he ungrateful for the interest taken in his behalf? Leave him not, still do him good, for he is yet thy brother. This is the voice of Christianity, and unlike the voice of every other religion. The Greek and Roman deemed all barbarians but themselves—and the philosopher even justified their slavery. The Jew acknowledges no brother but a Jew. The Mahometan despises and hates all who bow not to the authority of his prophet. 'Tis the spirit of their respective systems thus to feel and act. But not so with Christianity; it has no respect for names, it has no partialities, no favorites, nor has it one enemy that it would not love and bless. It goes forth into the world, and, utterly regardless of the petty disputes and divisions that are abroad, wherever it finds a man, it salutes him as a child of God, and extends the hand of kindness—no matter what his color or language, no matter what soil he treads, or to what creed he subscribes. Such are the generous and universal principles of the religion of Christ; and they throw around it a glory which no other religion of the past or present can claim to share with it.

6. If we turn to the morality of the Christian religion, we shall discover the same superiority, we shall find a purity and perfection which that age of itself never could have produced. The writings of the wisest and best who flourished before, and at the time of, the advent of Christ, show plainly that they were altogether unable to reach the elevated standard of Gospel morality without assistance, that they were incapable of forming a system so correct, so harmonious in all its principles and precepts. The beauty and excellency of Christianity in this respect are indeed beyond praise, and it carries upon its very face the impress of its divine original. It has no communion with that morality which regulates only the exterior, which restrains only the outward action, while it leaves the af-

fections untouched. It goes farther than this—it seeks to purify the fountain from corruption, it aims to correct the principles, to regulate the heart, and to form the lives of men by forming their dispositions. Many things which the world approves, or at least refuses to condemn, are forbidden in the most express terms by the Gospel—as the inordinate love of power and wealth, the extravagant devotion to pleasure, pride, ambition, envy, the cherishing unholy passions and appetites. All these are unhesitatingly denounced in every form, and degree by the Christian faith. “It prohibits the adultery of the eye, and the murder of the heart; and commands the desire to be strangled in its birth. Neither the hands, the tongue, the head, nor the heart, must be guilty of one iniquity. However the world may applaud the heroic ambition of one, the love of glory in another, the successful pursuit of affluence in a third, the high minded-pride, the glowing patriotism which would compel all neighboring nations to bow the neck, the steady pursuit of revenge for injuries received, and a sovereign contempt of the rude and ignoble vulgar,—Christianity condemns them all, and enjoins its disciples to crucify them without delay. Not one is to be spared, though dear as a right eye for use or pleasure, or even necessary as a right hand for defence or labor. The Gospel does not press men to consider what their fellow men may think of them, or how it will affect their temporal interests; but what is right.”\* Such is the morality of the New Testament.

7. Now we ask here where the Jewish fishermen obtained this admirable code of morals, if their story be not true? They tell us that they received these things from Jesus, who was sent of God to proclaim them to the world, and to whom God communicated without measure,

the spirit of wisdom, and knowledge, and understanding. If we refuse to believe their story, how shall we account for it that, ignorant and unskilled as they were in the learning and philosophy of the age, they were nevertheless able to give to the world a religion whose morality, in its purity and adaptation to the wants of men, far exceeded any thing the world had known before? We see not how this question can be answered without, on the one hand, involving what may be pronounced an impossibility, or on the other the admission of the truth of the Gospel history. Men situated as these writers were, could not have produced, from their own observation and knowledge, the moral system of the New Testament; they could not, surrounded with the corruptions of the age in which they lived, have acquired of themselves such correct conceptions of the great principles of ethics, such exalted and perfect views of human duty as they have unfolded in their works.\* There is proof, then, in this unquestionable fact, of the truth of the history they have given us, which history satisfactorily accounts for the sublimity of their religion, and the excellency of their moral principles and precepts.

8. Another evidence of the truth of the Gospel history is the character of Jesus Christ. It is wholly original,

\* "That a system so just, so liberal, so comprehensive and complete, should have been invented and published by a combination of the efforts and researches of the wisest and best men in any age and country, would have been the subject of just admiration; but that it should have been introduced, and taught, and inculcated, without any ostentation or parade, by a small number of unlearned men, who had been educated in all the narrow bigotry and malignant prejudices of Pharisaic Jews, is surely to the last degree incredible, not to say absolutely impossible, if the supposition of divine instruction, and supernatural illumination should be denied." Belsham's *Evidences*, pp. 65, 96.

altogether unlike any that had ever been portrayed before, and as pure and perfect as the religion of which he was the founder. There is nothing about him which partakes of the age in which he lived ; he is as free from its prejudices, its follies, and errors, as if he were the inhabitant of another world. Though a Jew, it is but in name ; he had none of the bigotry or selfishness, none of the narrow feelings of a Jew ; his views of things ran far beyond the bounds of Judea, burst out from the trammels of the Mosaic institutions, and took in those that were near, and those that were afar off. He lived not for himself, not for a single people, but for the world, and for the world he labored and taught. His expansive mind, his generous affections, could not be confined within the contracted limits of name or party ; he sought the good of the great whole, and found his own happiness in promoting the happiness of his race. This was not the characteristic of the age, it was a feeling, a principle, centuries in advance of those around him.

9. He was of humble birth, the son of a carpenter, a native of the obscure village of Nazareth ; he had no powerful friends, no wealth, no patronage, no rank, or education, fitting him for the mighty work which he undertook. And yet this young man, starting under all these disadvantages and discouragements, forms the stupendous plan of overturning "the time-hallowed and deep-rooted religions of the world," and establishing a new and better faith and practice ! This was an attempt never yet made ; all other religions had been for a single people, for particular nations. The most extravagant ambition had never aimed at so great an acquisition as the bringing the world into one common faith. But the humble, unlettered, and unknown Nazarene, unsupported and alone, stands forth as a leader in this mighty enterprise, and announces a religion intended for all, a religion which is to

supersede every other, and to be received by all nations, and climes, and tongues!\*

10. And how does he sustain his new and difficult position? In a most wonderful manner; he never once departs from his course, never once falls below the dignity of his enterprise in language or in conduct. His teachings and his actions, his doctrines and his demeanor, are always marked with a perfect consciousness of superiority and authority, well fitting the character of the work he had undertaken. When reviled, he never came down from the height on which he stood to revile again; when persecuted, he bore it with the calmness of one who, expecting it from the outset, had counted the cost and was ready to meet it; when cursed, he returned it with blessings, and never, on any occasion, however much of provocation there was, lost the command of his feelings. There was no hasty or angry speaking, no show of retaliation or revenge towards those who injured him; he seemed to look beyond these things with the calm confidence of one who knows he shall succeed at last, in spite of the obstacles that spring up in his pathway. And though often placed in the most difficult and trying situations, he was never once betrayed into the saying or doing any thing unworthy of himself, or inconsistent with the nature and objects of the sacred mission in which he was engaged.

11. His steady perseverance in the path of duty, amid all changes and in the face of all dangers, his immovable integrity, his calm indifference to all honor, and power, and wealth, and favor, when in the way of his work, is a feature in his character so high, so pure, and withal so noiseless and unobtrusive, that no one can appreciate it without an irrepressible feeling of reverence for the being

\* See on this particular the eloquent language of Channing, in his *Dudleian Lectures*.



who exhibits it. There is no parade of his strength of mind and heart, no boast of his determined firmness, no declamation or threats that he will do, in defiance of opposition, even unto death; nothing of this is seen or heard, but there is a quiet going-forward in the way of duty, not because he would be thought brave and fearless, but for a reason nobler than this, because it is right. He meets with violent enemies who dispute every step of his progress, but he cannot turn from his course; he must go on; he has a work to perform, and he may not pause until it is finished. This work of his is paramount to all other considerations; of more account with him is it than every thing beside, and his thoughts are only that it must be done. The difficulties are never regarded as any cause for hesitation or doubt, but as evils necessarily associated with it, which, if they can, without sacrifice of duty, may be avoided; but if not, must be met and overcome. He may suffer much; he expects it, indeed; he looks for persecution from those whose worldly interests, whose pride and authority, will be affected; they may impose heavy burthens upon him, they may cause him many sorrows and trials, they may even put him to death—he sees, he knows that these things will be, yet he must, for all this, do his duty, and go on to the end. But there is no fanaticism here, no rashness in this unshrinking firmness and perseverance; he does not seek these perils and sufferings, he does not thirst for a martyr's death and glory, he has no low ambition of this sort—he would have avoided these things if he could have done it without being unfaithful; but he must be faithful, come what will. He had the feelings of a man, he suffered as a man: "Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." 'T is not to be a stoic, or a studied savage, that constitutes the triumph; it is to feel keenly, to suffer intensely, yet to rise

above all the weakness of the shrinking flesh, to encounter pain and torture, to die, because it is right—this is the true triumph, and this was the triumph and the glory of the man Christ Jesus. At times, his utter wretchedness and the strength of his agony recall his thoughts for a moment to himself, but it is for a moment only—when he remembers the object of his mission and how much depends upon it, how many will suffer in darkness and ignorance if he pauses, and how many will rejoice in the mighty truths of which he feels himself to be the repository, if he will labor and endure yet farther—when these thoughts return upon him, he forgets his own in the good of the whole; he thinks no longer of the weight of his sorrows, but of the blessings that will follow to the world. The voice of suffering, indeed, calls upon him in earnest tones to lay aside the cup of bitterness; but the voice of duty, of truth and a world's salvation, calls upon him to drink it, and he drinks it to the dregs. He dies as he had lived, not for himself, but for the human race.\*

\* And in his daily walk while he freely forgave the wrongs of his enemies, he was never blind to the faults of his friends; and while those stood awed in the presence of a great soul lifted above all resentment and revenge, these bowed with increased affection before the rebuke of a love beautiful even in the severity of its faithfulness. And while the poor and the sinful found in him a friend and helper, full of tenderness for their sorrows and their weaknesses; the rich and the proud never found in him the narrowness of a partisan, the bigotry of a zealot, or the violence of the destructive.

And in his views of man and human destiny, he shows the same breadth of thought and action. No creeds or boundary lines, no distinctions of rank or character, narrowed or confined his sympathies, or checked his labors of love. He gave a new and noble definition to the term neighbor; he revealed and lived the sublime truth of human brotherhood. And rising above the gross and sensual thought of those who sought to entangle him, he enunciated in lofty speech that yet lingers in the ears and thrills in the hearts of men

12. Such is the character of Jesus Christ, as given in the Gospel histories. Now that such men as the Evangelists, without learning, or science, or philosophy, should of themselves conceive so perfect, so glorious a character, without any model or reality from which to copy, is as probable as that a savage just from the woods should have written the Philosophical Essays of Hume, or the astronomical works of Newton. The supposition is, in our opinion, a moral impossibility, and it is believed that no candid person would dissent from this opinion. The only conclusion then, is, that the character of Christ is real, and that the Gospel writers have copied their account from life.

13. We shall offer no apology for adding here the acknowledgment of a celebrated sceptic. "I will confess," says he, "that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel has its influence upon my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction: how mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book, at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that

—"In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are equal unto the angels, and are children of God, being children of the resurrection!"

Theologically he regarded God not simply as kindly disposed and benevolent as earthly parents; but, in all good of purpose and action, as infinitely above these as One whose essence, whose life is Love; of whom, THROUGH whom, and TO whom are all things! And in this great faith he looked forward to the final triumph of good over evil, the fraternization of the nations, and the redemption of the world. To him nothing less than this grand conclusion of the divine creation and government, could vindicate the moral perfection of the Father, or render honorable the infinite power and the unfailing wisdom of God.

the sacred personage, whose history it contains, should be a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the tone of an enthusiast or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his manners! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discoveries! What presence of mind in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live, and so die, without weakness, and without ostentation? Shall we suppose the Evangelical history a mere fiction? Indeed, it bears not the marks of a fiction; on the contrary, the history of Socrates, which no one presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ. Such a supposition, in fact, only shifts the difficulty, without obviating it: it is more inconceivable that a number of persons should agree to write such a history, than that one only should furnish the subject of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and were strangers to the morality contained in the Gospel, the marks of whose truths are so striking and inimitable, that *the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero.*"\*

14. Such is the language of a distinguished unbeliever; and he speaks truly when he says that the inventor would be a more wonderful character than the hero. And we ask even the most reluctant to contemplate the inimitable character of Christ as given in the New Testament, to consider by whom it is drawn, and determine whether they can come to any other conclusion. A character, the harmony and perfection of which never has been equalled,—a religion bursting out from the midnight of heathenism and presenting the world with the most sublime and ennobling views of the only true and living God, and of

\* Rousseau, quoted by Horne, v. i. p. 421. note.

the spiritual worship required by him,—a morality in which all is correct, consistent and complete, in which no virtue is omitted, and no false principle tolerated, in which no external rite whatever is allowed to take the place of duty, while duty is made to consist in those very acts and dispositions upon which the proud philosophy of the age looked with contempt; as humility, meekness, forbearance, forgiveness, love of enemies, and a desire to promote the welfare and happiness of all—that this splendid system could have been the invention of men whose lives had been a scene of continued labor, whose hands and heads had ever been at work to get them bread,—is a greater miracle, by far than any recorded in the Gospel history; \* and he who rejects this history, escapes not the supernatural, but is absolutely forced into the admission of a more wonderful miracle than he is required to believe in receiving it as truth. According to his own principles, therefore, the sceptic should believe the Gospel history, for in so doing he chooses the least of two evils.

15. We have been somewhat more lengthy on this particular than was intended, but if the reader attaches to it the same importance that we do, he will not be displeased. If we know any thing of the principles by which human nature is regulated, or of the causes to which the human mind is indebted for its acquisitions in knowledge and power, there is some weight in the observations which have been made. We are certain that a Hottentot could not have framed the Constitution of the United States; we are certain of this from what we know of the nature and mind of man in such a situation as that of the Hottentots.

\* Mr. Hume would say that it is “contrary to all our experience,” and therefore false. Will his followers abide the result of his theory.

And by the same rule we are certain that the Evangelists could not have invented the character and actions of Jesus Christ, or the religion of the New Testament. The fair conclusion then, and, it would seem, the only honest one, is, that the Gospel History is true.

## SECTION II.

### ARGUMENT FROM THE SIMPLICITY AND CIRCUMSTANTIALITY OF THE HISTORY.

1. THE simplicity of the Gospel narrative affords a strong presumption in favor of its truth. It is generally the case when men have a wonderful story to tell, that they are lavish of their professions of veracity, that they are continually intermixing with their relations declarations of the truth of these relations, as if they expected to have them doubted.\* And every little incident or particular, which might furnish any thing of credit to the tale, is seized upon and made to stand forth in bold relief. But we see nothing of the kind in the Gospel writers, no attempt to bolster up their statements by repeated assertions of their own honesty, or of the probability and reasonableness of the facts they relate. There is a perfect simplicity and honesty in the whole of their history from first to last. The most ordinary circumstances, and the most astounding events, are stated in the same open manner, and with the same calmness of spirit. It does not seem to have occurred to them that they must make any protestations of sincerity, or declare to their readers that they were telling the truth, they know that they are honest themselves, and they seem to take it for granted

\* This is strikingly illustrated in the Koran of Mohammed.

that no one will suspect them of being otherwise ; and it is in this temper of mind that they record the most wonderful miracles, without ever dreaming that their statements will be called in question. Indeed, they proceed upon the ground that the facts of which they write had already acquired such a notoriety, were so public, so well known, that no one would think of disputing them, and hence they do not stop to make any affirmations, or enter into any labored arguments to prove them true.

2. Let us take a few examples.—“ And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked.” John v. Here is the relation of a great miracle, and the relation only ; there is no attempt to prove it true, no assertions that it was a real manifestation of supernatural power—they simply state the fact, and there leave it. Again,—“ He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass ; and took the five loaves and two fishes, and, looking up to heaven, he blessed and brake ; and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled, and they took up the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.” Matt. xiv. Here is the account of another wonderful event, but there is annexed to it no declarations of its authenticity ; the writer says not a word in the way of defending the truth of his story ; he does not seem to think of being disbelieved, and, therefore, takes no precaution to fortify his statements with accompanying asseverations. Once more.—When the widow of Nain’s son was carried out to burial, the historian says, “ The Lord saw her, and had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier ; and they that bear it stood



still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.— And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.” Luke vii. This, too, is the record of a stupendous miracle, and yet the same simplicity and confidence is observed in its narration. Not a single effort to gain the belief of the reader, not one word of explanation with the view of making it appear plausible; he gives us the statement only, and having done this, leaves it in our hands. Now, we ask any man if this does not look like honesty? if it does not carry upon its very face the appearance of truth? Had these statements been mere fabrications, they certainly would have chosen a more insidious style of relating them; they would have been ready with their apologies and affirmations, for the purpose of making them go down. But not so here; the writers lay before us these astonishing accounts with all the frankness imaginable, without adding any qualifications or recommendations. “It does not appear,” says Dr. Duchal, “that ever it came into the mind of these writers, how this or that action would appear to mankind, or what objections might be raised on them. But, without at all attending to this, they state the plain facts, at no pains to think whether they would appear credible or not. If the reader will not believe their testimony, there is no help for it: they tell the truth, and attend to nothing else. Surely this looks like sincerity, and that they published nothing to the world but what they believed themselves.”\*

\* Presumpt Ev. cited by Paley. The remarks of Dr. Campbell on this point are equally happy:—“The greatest miracles are recorded with as little of doubt or wonder in the writer, and with as little suspicion of the reader’s incredulity as of the most ordinary incidents. A manner as unlike that of impostors as of enthusiasts; a manner in which these writers are altogether singu-

3. Another evidence of the truth of these histories, is the particularity which appears in the notice or account of almost every event. The writers continually refer to persons and places, giving names and dates, and connecting a variety of circumstances with their narratives, which they certainly would not have done if they knew their statements to be false. A man who seeks to impose upon the public a story having no truth in it, is careful to avoid mentioning any names, dates, or places, and is sure to add no circumstances, to make no allusions, which might lead to a detection of the fraud. The man who should design to deceive you in the relation of some wonderful events would not tell you that it happened in State street, Boston; or in the Park, New York; or in the market place of Cincinnati—at noon of the first day of January 1849; that it was witnessed by Mr. A., B., and C., officers of the government, and other well known persons, whose names are mentioned—he would not adopt a course like this, because he would know that he was furnishing you, in these particulars, with the means of proving the falsehood of his story. He would, therefore, cautiously shun all particulars, and give his relation in general terms, which would the better prevent an exposure of the imposition. This is the course universally adopted by deceivers of this character; names and places are left blank, and no references or allusions are made which would be likely to lead to a detection of the fraud. Not so, however, with the writers of the Gospel history; they give, in all their statements, the where, the when, the why; and they associate with them numerous circumstances and partic-

lar; and I will add, a manner which can on no supposition be tolerably accounted for, but that of the truth, and not of the truth only, but of the notoriety of the events which they relate." *Diss. on Miracles*, v. i. p. 131. Edinburgh, 1797.

ulars which would serve the opposer to cross-question them, and expose any deception which might belong to their story.

4. A single example, that of the resurrection, will suffice to show this. In the brief accounts which the Evangelists have written of this memorable event, there are the following distinct particulars, each of which, if the relation were false, was sufficient to have proved it so. 1. The burial in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, well known for his wealth, and as a member of the court of the Sanhedrim. 2. Mention of the chief priests and elders, who, of course, were equally well known. 3. Pontius Pilate, the governor. 4. The Roman soldiers. 5. The guarding the sepulchre. 6. The earthquake; and perhaps we may add the three hour's darkness that overspread the land, though this strictly belonged to the crucifixion. 7. The place—Jerusalem. 8. The time—the celebration of the Passover, when Jews were crowding to the city from all quarters. 9. The report of the Pharisees, that the body was stolen. Here are not fewer than nine or ten particulars in this single account, every one of which is altogether incompatible with an attempt at deception—every one of which is sufficient of itself to have condemned the writer's whole history, had no such event taken place. Now we ask the candid unbeliever if he can bring himself to credit the supposition that these men could have been so blind, if they were telling falsehood, as to have left open—nay, worse than this, to have opened themselves ten different channels, by each of which their falsehood could have been exposed?

5. Take another example: the healing of the sick and maimed, and the feeding of the four thousand, as recorded by Matt. xv. 29—38. Here the particulars stated must inevitably have led to discovery, if the story was

false. 1. The place—a mountain “nigh unto the sea of Galilee.” 2. The kind of miracles, viz: healing those “that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others.” Also feeding “four thousand men besides women and children” with “seven loaves and a few little fishes.” 3. The witnesses: “great multitudes” in the first named miracles, beside those actually healed; and the thousands who were fed in the last.

6. Now here is a statement of a series of most wonderful events, said to have taken place in a neighborhood well known, and in the presence of many thousands of witnesses, in open day. How easy it would have been to have proved such a story false, if no such events had taken place. And does it look as if the historian was conscious of telling a falsehood, and was guarding against detection? If it were all invention, if no such miracles were ever wrought, why select such a public place for the scene of the fiction? Why have such a multitude of witnesses? As the statement stands now, the least possible inquiry would have determined its truth or falsehood. If true, out of such a multitude some could have been found, who had been partakers of the miraculous feast, or who had been healed, or who had seen others healed, or at least who had heard of the wonderful events. But if false, any one setting out on this inquiry, would be disappointed at every step, and the fraud be exposed at once. We ask, then, if this circumstantiality, this multiplication of the means of investigation, and detection if false, does not argue strongly for the historical truth of the narrative? Do men who are getting up a deception or a fraud, voluntarily furnish the evidence of the imposition; and seemingly invite to the exposure? Certainly not; and if the Gospel historians are not stating facts, their conduct is an anomaly in human actions, and “contrary to all our experience” in like cases. And let it be remarked, that

it is not in one or two cases that this particularity occurs; but the whole New Testament is constructed on the same principle.

17. In this view of the matter, therefore, we repeat, that this circumstantiality throughout the Gospel histories, is an evident proof of their truth; for no man, who was telling what he knew had no foundation in fact, would connect with it numerous particulars, each one of which would be alone sufficient to expose the falsehood.\*

\* Mr. Gibbon says, in his comments upon the supposed miraculous cross of Constantine, that "the precise circumstances of time and place always serve to detect falsehood, or establish truth." *Decline and Fall*, c. xx. We wonder how he disposes of "the precise circumstances of time and place," and many other precise circumstances, with which the Gospel histories abound. If they "*always* serve to detect falsehood, and these histories are falsehoods, why was it not detected on the spot, and the whole scheme crushed in embryo? It seems to us that this one acknowledgment of Mr. Gibbon places the Christian miracles utterly beyond the reach of what Byron justly calls his "solemn sneer."

### SECTION III.

#### ARGUMENT FROM THE HONESTY OF THE WRITERS IN RECORDING THEIR OWN FAULTS.

1. A strong argument for the truth of the Gospel history is found in the honesty of the writers in recording their own faults, and the faults of their brethren. There are numerous instances of this in almost every book of the New Testament, and the great plainness of speech which is sometimes employed is truly surprising. Now we say that the frank and open manner in which these things are stated, carries along with it an air of reality that is almost irresistible, and seems to force upon the mind the conviction that they have recorded the events of their history as they actually took place, without fear or favor. A few examples will be sufficient to illustrate this point to the satisfaction, we should hope, of even the most unwilling mind.

2. In the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, Luke has given the account of two disputes among the disciples, one of which, that between Paul and Barnabas, had not a little of severity in it. The words of the historian are as follows:—"And Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John,

whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other. And so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed." There are two particulars here which invite our attention. First, the writer mentions the defection of John from his duty, his refusal to go to the work of the ministry in Pamphylia, which is surely no honorable notice of this fellow laborer, and not much to his commendation. Second, the quarrel between Paul and Barnabas on account of this circumstance. Paul was unwilling to take John Mark, because he had once before deserted him, while Barnabas was exceedingly earnest that he should accompany them. They cannot agree, and the result is that they are involved in a contention so sharp and severe that they separate from each other! And this unhappy dispute among the immediate followers of Christ, who had exhorted them with his dying breath, as it were, to love one another as he had loved them. This bitter strife was between those who were teachers of a religion, the very soul of which was brotherly kindness, forbearance, and charity. And, strange as it may appear, the history of this is given by one of their own number in the first records of the Christian church! We ask if this looks like imposture—if this is giving the bright side of things, while every circumstance reflecting upon their own characters is kept out of sight? Who does not see that there is nothing like imposition or deception here? who does not see that this honest statement of their failings carries upon its very face the impress of truth, and testifies in so many words that the writer had no intention of deceiving, or of stating any thing but facts whether honorable, or otherwise, to those concerned?

3. A remarkable example of the honesty and plainness of the first teachers in this respect is found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, at the sixth chapter. "Be not deceived," says he, "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you,*" &c. This is most assuredly a severe sentence, and it could not have been a very pleasant one to the Corinthians. They are told without the least preface or qualification that they had been fornicators, thieves, extortioners, revilers, drunkards, and the like. Now, it appears to us that he who states facts of this character, cannot be set down as one who would wish to impose a false history or relation upon his fellow men. This frankness of speech, this severe honesty, seems enough to preclude the supposition of any thing like an attempt or a desire to deceive. And it may be well to say here that this very circumstance was seized upon by the early opposers of the Christian religion. The well known Porphyry, a violent enemy of the faith, who wrote in the year 370, notices the contention of Paul and Barnabas; and the example in question was employed against the Christians by the emperor Julian in the treatise composed by him in 361. After citing the passage given above, he sneeringly adds; "I presume Paul was not so void of shame, as to send them such reproaches in his letter to them, if he had not known them to be just. These are things which he writes of his disciples, and to themselves." Such is the conclusion of Julian, and we agree with him perfectly, that these charges were true, and the open manner in which they are stated goes to show that the New Testament writers recorded only facts, and concealed no circumstance merely because they thought it might have an unfavorable bearing upon them-



selves or friends.\* And it is well worthy of notice that the preservation of this letter by the Corinthian church, containing as it does such startling comments upon their characters, is conclusive proof of their respect for the authority of Paul, and their reverence of whatever came from him.†

4. Very like this is that which Paul says in the third chapter of his letter to Titus. "For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Here is a plain unequivocal confession that they were once of the most wicked and vicious character, indulging in all manner of iniquity, and serving the worst of fleshly lusts and passions. Does it look much like trumpeting their own perfections, or varnishing over their faults and vices? There was no call for this acknowledgment, no necessity for this humiliating statement; they might have omitted it, they might have been silent. But this does not seem to have occurred to them; they do not appear even to have thought of concealing any thing, because, if known, it might be prejudicial to them or their cause. They honestly state the truth, whether for or against themselves, without stopping

\*Celsus, in his work against Christianity, also makes use of these very facts to bring the Christians into reproach. "These Christians," says he, "declare that their God was sent to sinners. They give encouragement to sinners, because they cannot persuade any really good and honest men. Therefore they open the doors to the most wicked and abandoned." Again he says, they reject the learned, the wise and prudent, "but welcome, as most acceptable to their God, the foolish, the vulgar, the stupid, slaves, women and children." *Lardner, works*, vii. 219, 222. Norton's *Genuineness of the Gospels*, vol. i. 63—67. Celsus wrote about the years 176.

† See also 1 Corinthians, chapters v, vi, and vii.

to inquire how it may seem to others, or what effect it may produce.

5. We shall select one more instance, and with it close our remarks on this particular. When Christ was betrayed by Judas, and the multitude came out to take him, the historian records the sad story of his brethren's desertion of their Master, in the following words—"Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled." How little to their credit to leave him thus at the very hour in which they should have stood by him, and proved their fidelity. And how true to the facts must the Gospel writers have been, how conscientious, to have recorded a circumstance so unworthy of them, and so directly at variance with their professions of faithfulness. But this is not all, we have a farther account of Peter. He was charged with being a follower of Jesus, he denied it without hesitation, affirming that he knew not what they meant. Here was falsehood! A second time it was said to him that he was with Jesus of Nazareth, and he denied with an oath, saying, "I do not know the man." Here was falsehood with an oath! Once more it was said to him, "Surely thou art also one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then he began to curse and swear, saying, I know not the man." Here again was falsehood, with oaths, with cursing and swearing! Now can any man bring himself to believe that if the writers of the Gospel histories had been impostors, they would have invented such stories as these? If they had wished to deceive the world, and to palm off a religion of their own making, would they have taken this method to have recommended it? Would they have represented its first teachers, yea, themselves indeed, as deserting their Master like cowards, and one of their number, who had professed great attachment, as swearing and cursing in his wrath against those who told him that he was a fol-

lower of Jesus? We ask if this looks reasonable, if this is the usual way with impostors?\*

6. If the whole history is invention, why did they not invent better facts? why did they not tell a story more to their own credit, and in commendation of the religion they sought to establish? It was as easy to forge a history of this sort, surely; and it is much more likely that they would have done it, than that they should have forged the one we now have. Men who would thus defame their own characters, who would get up statements most prejudicial to themselves, and having a tendency to retard, instead of advancing their cause, seem to us to be strange impostors indeed. When a man lies, it is generally for, not against his interests; and if one makes a statement which is plainly opposed to his interests and known pursuits, and persists in that statement, the conclusion is almost irresistible, that it is true, otherwise he could not make it. This is precisely the case with the New Testament writers: they have given us a history, and in this history they have made certain statements which give no very pleasant colorings to their own characters; they plainly and frankly acknowledge their faults, and without hesitation record as a part of their relation, events in which they and their companions appear to the greatest disadvantage. They conceal nothing, they make no attempt to evade these unpleasant facts, they offer no excuse for their conduct, but speak right on like honest men, and leave the reader to make his own comments. This, no impostor ever has done, or would do; and we say therefore that this characteristic of the Gospel histories is clear evidence of their truth.

\* The principle involved in this argument will be further illustrated in chap. ix, in the examination of Strauss' theory.

#### SECTION IV.

ARGUMENT FROM THE FACT THAT MANY OF THE EVENTS ARE  
PRECISELY WHAT WE SHOULD EXPECT UNDER THE GIVEN  
CIRCUMSTANCES.

1. ANY one who is acquainted to any considerable extent with the history of the times in which Christianity made its appearance, will discover in many of the events and particulars related by the Gospel writers something so very natural, so perfectly consonant to the circumstances, that a conviction of their truth irresistibly, at the first glance, forces itself upon the mind. This feature of the narrative is observable not in the more important events alone, but is seen inwoven with the smaller and, so to speak, the more trifling matters that are incidentally mentioned by the historians. It is the object of the present section to place before the reader a few examples of this character, that he may judge for himself whether there is not a remarkable appearance of reality about them, and whether they do not furnish an evidence of the truth of the story.

2. The first example to which we shall invite attention is that recorded in Acts xviii. 12—17. “And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the

judgment seat, saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you : but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it ; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drove them from the judgment seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of these things."

3. The circumstances here mentioned are perfectly natural. Gallio was the Roman deputy or governor of the province ; and in common with the rest of his countrymen entertained a most contemptible opinion of the Jews, of their religion, and their conduct. He labored under the same mistake that was made by all the heathen of that and the succeeding age, or the former part of it, that the Jews and Christians were only different sects of the same faith, and therefore makes no distinction between them. How consistent with these facts is his conduct at the judgment seat. " If your quarrel be one of words and names, or of your law, look to it yourselves ; for I will be no judge of such matters." This is exactly the language which a Roman governor would adopt on such an occasion : he had no thought of troubling his head about their disputes of names and words, or about their law ; if they could not agree among themselves, it was their own lookout, he had business of more importance to attend to, than their religious quarrels. And when they began to contend with each other, and took Sosthenes and beat him, it is said, " And Gallio cared for none of these things." Just as we should suppose it would be : " Let them strive if they will, about their religion, it is none of my concern." Here is a perfect indifference as to their affairs

and an utter contempt for themselves, which, as before observed, was ever the feeling of a Roman for the Jews. Is there not something very like truth in the notice of this incident?

4. Another example is found in Acts xxv. Paul had been arrested; and the Jews desired Festus, the Roman governor of Judea, to send Paul to Jerusalem for trial; for they had failed to bring over Felix, the former governor. Accordingly, when Paul was brought before Festus, and the Jews had accused him, and he had denied the charges,—“Festus,” says the historian, “willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? (He was then at Cesarea.) Then said Paul, I stand at Cæsar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar.” This is a relation of what we should look for under the given circumstances. Paul knew very well that if he went to Jerusalem, and there, surrounded with powerful and deadly foes, should be tried for life, there was no safety for him, his condemnation was certain. He had before his eyes the fate of his Master, who, though the governor confessed he found no cause of death in him, was nevertheless most cruelly murdered; and he knew that to go up to Jerusalem to be tried, was to set the signature to his own death warrant. The moment, therefore, this was proposed by Festus, he replied, “I appeal unto Cæsar.” This was the privilege of every Roman citizen; he had a right, when he thought himself wronged, to appeal to Cæsar, or the emperor, and the governor was obliged to send him to Rome. Paul knew this, and knew that it would

put him out of the power of the Jews, and accordingly appealed. Does not this very natural statement look like a case of actual occurrence?

5. In the same chapter we have a corroboration of the first example. Festus, in telling the story to Agrippa, says that he commanded Paul to be brought before him, and adds, "Against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed; but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." We confess we never met with any thing that looks more like truth than this statement. One cannot imagine any language more perfectly suited to the circumstances, than this used by Festus. He had just come into Judea, as governor—he finds Paul a prisoner—the Jews beset him to send Paul to Jerusalem for trial—he proposes first to hear something about the case where he is, at Cesarea—Paul is brought forth, and the Jews accuse him—Festus is puzzled; he expected to hear him charged with some crime; instead of that, he hears a long story about something else—but wishing to please the Jews, over whom he is placed, he conceals his feelings, and asks Paul if he will go to Jerusalem for trial. But mark the difference when he tells the matter to Agrippa; he speaks out his real feelings—"they had certain questions against him of their own superstitions, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Can any thing be more perfectly natural than this? Like Gallio he knew nothing, and cared nothing about their superstitions, though he concealed it at the time, because he wished to make himself popular with the Jews. And observe how he speaks of the principal matter of dispute—"of one Jesus"—he knew nothing about this Jesus, but that the Jews said he was dead, and Paul affirmed he was alive, and it was a matter of perfect indif-

ference to him which was right. Now it seems to us that if ever there was a statement which carried upon its face the marks of honest truth, this most assuredly is the one.

5. An example of like character is recorded in Acts xvii. 32. Paul was at Athens—he had encountered the Epicureans and Stoics, two sects of philosophers, and had disputed with them; but they, being desirous to hear him farther, brought him to the Areopagus, where he delivered his celebrated discourse. These philosophers heard him very patiently until he came to speak of the resurrection; but “when,” says the historian, “they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.” Now we have only to remember that both the Stoics and Epicureans denied the resurrection, and that the latter thought it impossible even for the gods to effect it, and we shall at once see how natural it is to suppose that these proud spirits would mock at Paul for preaching it. Had not the historian stated this fact, we should have reasoned in ourselves that they would have mocked, when the Apostle came to this part of his discourse. They looked upon it as supremely ridiculous, and would of course laugh at it. It is like this—we should hear a man tell his own adventures very patiently, until he came to talk about witches or ghosts, and when he affirmed he had really seen these, we should laugh at him—we should mock. Well, the Epicureans and Stoics regarded the resurrection in the same light that we do witchcraft and ghost-stories. How natural then that they should mock when Paul came to this. It is just what we should expect, and the mention of it is an evidence of the truth of the history.

7. At the end of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, we have another instance. Jesus went into the synagogue and taught them, insomuch that they were astonished.



And they said, "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him." Now this is in perfect agreement with human nature. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" And shall we be taught by him? How comes it that he knows so much more than we? Did he not grow up among us with his brothers and sisters? And are not his father and mother our neighbors? Pray then shall he take it upon himself to be our teacher? We will not endure it. "And they were offended in him." Have we not an example of this same feeling every day? How perfectly consonant, then, with what we know of the human heart, that these people should feel their pride wounded at being taught by a "carpenter's son." And it seems to us that the very simplicity of this account, and its being so like what we should imagine would be the conduct of the people, are strong proof of its reality.

8. We shall now notice a few instances of a less obvious character, but perhaps the more convincing on this account. The first which we shall mention may be found in John xi. 36. Jesus was on his way to the grave of Lazarus, Mary and Martha met him, and "when Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in spirit, and was troubled, and wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him." These last are the words to which we especially refer, "Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him." If the writer had forged his history, and designed to introduce the miracle of raising Lazarus to support it, he would not have been likely to have introduced this particular; he would have gone on directly to his object, the

miracle. The introduction of this remark by the way plainly shows that it was made, or otherwise the writer would not have thought of it. It does not belong to the miracle—it makes no part of the story—it seems to have been mentioned, not because it was necessary, but because it was true. It was an incidental remark of the Jews; the writer recollects it, and therefore mentions it.

9. The same remarks are applicable to the next verse:—“And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?” In this there is an undesigned allusion to another miracle; it does not appear to be forced in—it is perfectly natural, and just such an observation as we should expect from those who had witnessed the miracle mentioned. If the history was forged, the resurrection of Lazarus doubtless made a part of the writer’s plan; but this speech of the Jews could not, for it had no connection with the event. It seems to us to be one of those many particulars in the Gospel histories which never would have been thought of, if they had not been true. The object of the writer is to give an account of the raising of Lazarus; as he proceeds, this observation of the by-standers appears to have come into his mind, and he notes it down as he goes along.

10. In chapter xx of Acts we find another example. Paul had been preaching at some considerable length, and the writer in his account of it takes occasion to say “there were many lights in the upper chamber,” where they were assembled. He had already said that it was near midnight, which fact presupposes there were lights, and the observation seems to be made simply because the writer chanced to recollect the circumstance. An instance is found in chapter xxvi. 29.—Paul pleading before Agrippa forces him to exclaim, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Paul replies, “I would to God that not only

thou, but also all who hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." This last, "except these bonds," is a singular expression, and is called forth by the chain upon Paul's hands, as it was the custom to place them upon the Roman prisoners. We say this is a very peculiar expression, and it would seem that it never would have been thought of, had it not actually have been made under the circumstances mentioned. Had the history been forged or invented, this idea would not have occurred to the writer ; it is plainly the offspring of reality, and goes to confirm the truth of the narrative. In Acts ix. 43, it is written of Peter—"And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner." Would the person who composed this narrative, if it were all an invention, have added that Simon was a tanner ? It seems to us that the incidental mention of this fact looks very much like truth. There was no call for it if it was all fiction ; it has nothing to do with the objects of the history ; it appears to have been noticed without any design, not because it had any connection with the story, but because this was the fact.

11. Once more, and we have done. In Matthew xviii. 28, it is said that Christ was led from the presence of the high priest to the place of trial as follows :—"Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment ; and it was early." Now, this last circumstance has no connection with the portion of history where it is found ; there is no reason why he should have mentioned that it was early. It does not help us to understand the history at all ; the story is just as intelligible without it ; and there seems to be no other cause for its mention than that the writer recollected that it was early, and so noted the fact. In the account of the resurrection by John, we have the following :—"Then cometh Simon Peter, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie ;

and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself." Now, would any one be likely to invent this circumstance of the napkin's being wrapped up in a place by itself? It does not seem so to us, and it is hardly possible that it should to any candid mind. There is no cause for this statement unless it was true; it has nothing to do with the narrative; it was a matter of no consequence whether the napkin was by itself, or with the rest of the clothes; it is altogether an unimportant fact, and seems to have been mentioned only because it was a fact.

12. In concluding this section, we have only to ask any fair minded man to look at these few examples of undesignedness in the notice of small particulars, and inquire of himself if they are the marks of imposture or fiction. Yea, let him ask if they do not carry with them an air of truth and reality. It appears to us that they constitute one of the strongest internal evidence of the authenticity of the Gospel history, of the actual occurrence of the events mentioned therein. They are not what are denominated striking proofs, but they are convincing; they are not the blustering assertions of the writer that he is telling the truth, but they are retired, and must be brought out by careful examination. For this, however, they are the more valuable, and fully repay the labor of search, in strengthening the conviction of the honesty of the writer, and of the truth of what he relates.

## SECTION V.

**THE FACTS MENTIONED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, IF FALSE,  
WOULD HAVE LED TO IMMEDIATE EXPOSURE.**

1. In this section we shall bring forward some examples of events recorded in the Gospel histories, which, had they never taken place, would have exposed the fraud as soon as these histories were published, and Christianity would have been smothered in its very birth. The evidence gathered from this source we regard as of great importance in our inquiry, and it is hoped that the reader will give his undivided attention to it, and weigh with candor the inferences which shall be drawn from it.

2. The first example which we shall offer is that found in the history of the raising of Lazarus, and the son of the widow of Nain. John xi. Luke vii. We take them together, because they are of the same character, and what is applicable to one, is equally so to the other. Now, if the statement made in relation to these two individuals was false, how easy it would have been to prove it so. If no such miracles had ever been wrought, no one could have known any thing in relation to them; but if they were wrought, then thousands must have known it, and have been acquainted with the circumstances. Suppose then, when the Gospels were published, some one takes them up, and reads the account of these two

persons restored to life. He doubts the truth of it, perhaps, and immediately proceeds to make inquiries. He goes to the neighborhood in which they are said to have been performed; he asks of the people there if they had seen any thing of the kind; they tell him, No. He asks if they knew any one who did see these things? They answer, No. Again he asks if they had ever heard of any person's being raised from the dead in their vicinity? They still answer, No. He would conclude after this investigation, that the history was false. Now, is it not reasonable to suppose that some one, yea, that hundreds would have made these inquiries in relation to such remarkable events, had there been any doubt of their truth? And is it not plain that, had they been false, the wicked imposition would have been exposed at once, and the just condemnation of fraud and lying been fixed upon the writers? And would not their histories, containing such abominable falsehoods, have been given to the winds on their first appearance, instead of being believed by thousands who lived on the very spot where these miracles are said to have been performed?

3. Another instance of bold statement which, if false, might have been proved so at the outset, is the feeding of five thousand men, beside women and children, with five small loaves and two fishes; and afterwards the feeding another multitude of four thousand men with women and children, with seven loaves and a few small fishes. Matt. xiv. xv. What we wish the reader to observe here, is the number of witnesses that are honestly brought forward. There are in these two cases nine thousand men, and if we allow the women and children to be two thirds as many, we have at least *fifteen thousand* witnesses to this miraculous event. How easy for any one to have ascertained whether the history was true or false, when such a multitude were associated with it. If the number was

exaggerated, so much the worse for the writer—he gave the people a right to believe that it was very large, and if it was not, his veracity suffered accordingly. But suppose the whole story was false; let us see how such a statement would operate. The writer told the people that there were at least fifteen thousand who had witnessed the miracle, and had partaken of its benefits. Of course it must have been a common talk, known far and near. Some one doubts the miracle, he does not believe that so many were fed. “Nevertheless,” he says to himself, “if it be true, I can soon find it out, for if fifteen thousand were present, I can readily find one, or two, or twenty who were of the number.” He accordingly makes inquiries, but is utterly baffled, he cannot find a single person who witnessed the miracles, and what is worse, not one who ever heard of them before the book came out. Thus the fifteen thousand witnesses have entirely vanished!

4. This is precisely the situation of one who should have doubted the narrative in question at the time the Gospels were published, and this is precisely the result which would have followed his inquiries. And does not the reader perceive how soon and how easily falsehood would have been written upon these histories, had no such miracles as those named been performed? And we ask any reasonable man if it is a supposable case, that these writers would have associated such an immense number with the story of these miracles, had they been untrue, and thus have furnished their opposers with the means of proving them liars? There was no call for such a multitude, unless this were the actual number. If the whole was invention, five hundred would have done as well, and much better,—for it would, at this amount, have been a wonderful miracle, while at the same time it would have diminished by thirty fold the possibility of ex-

posure, or of proving the story false. The only conclusion then, is that this great number was stated because it was true, and with this number stated, the miracle must have been a fact, or it would certainly have been proved a falsehood, and the books have been rejected as an imposition.

5. The next example to which we would refer is that of Sergius Paulus, governor of the Island of Cyprus, in the Mediterranean. Acts xiii. Speaking of a certain sorcerer, the historian says, he "was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas, the sorcerer, withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith." On this account we are informed that Paul rebuked him, and thus spake:—"And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." Here we are told that the deputy or governor, Sergius, embraced the faith, and became a Christian. If this was false, how quickly it could have been proved so. Sergius was a man of note, a Roman Governor, and of necessity generally known. If he had not become a Christian the statement of the historian would immediately have been exposed as a deliberate untruth, and the character of the governor cleared of the charge: for be it remembered, it was a crime then to become a Christian. This, however, never was done, and it is a most happy, and somewhat singular circumstance, that the emperor Julian, the well-known enemy of Christianity in the year 361, mentions the fact of the conversion of Sergius Paulus, and admits its truth, adding that he and one or two others, were the



only men of note who were converted in the reigns of Tiberius and Claudius ; for he is careful to confine his assertion within a short space. It will be seen from this, that the conversion of Sergius was a fact so well known that it could not be disputed. If then the history is true in this matter, it must be true in a miracle, for this is the cause assigned why the deputy believed. The miracle and conversion are one story, and if the effect is true, the cause must be.

6. We shall mention one other example—the darkness attending the crucifixion, and the earthquake which took place at the resurrection. Matt. xxvii. 45, xxviii. 2. These are palpable, tangible facts, of which all who lived at the time in Judea, and especially all those at Jerusalem, were competent to judge. Now there either was, or was not, a supernatural darkness at the crucifixion, and there was, or was not, an earthquake at the resurrection ; if there was, then the history is true,—if there was not, we shall be unable to account for the existence of Christianity. Suppose the whole story of the death and resurrection of Christ to be a forgery—is it not plain that the moment the disciples put forth their pretended histories, their enemies would have pronounced them the basest of deceivers ? Is it not plain that people every where would have known the falsehood of this tale about the darkness and the earthquake ? Would they not say, “ This is evidently a most palpable imposition ; we know nothing about these matters, we witnessed no such events, we never have heard a word about this three hours’ darkness, or this remarkable earthquake. And here is a story about the veil of the temple being rent in twain from top to bottom. Now we know no such thing ever happened, and these men must be very stupid, or very mad, to suppose we should believe their books with these barefaced falsehoods upon their front.” We ask the unbeliever if the record,

would not have reasoned in this way, had these statements been false, had there been no darkness, no earthquake, no rending of the temple veil? And would not the Gospel histories, with the lie written upon their faces, have been rejected at once by the people, and the whole scheme exploded at the outset?

7. Will it be said now, to avoid this difficulty, that the histories may have been published long after the death of the people who lived at the time these things are said to have happened? But this objection comes too late; it has already been established that they were written by the disciples of Christ, and such an assertion is all in vain until the chain of history before given is broken and destroyed. Beside, if admitted, it avails nothing. For if the books be all fiction, whenever they were published that would be the first notice the people would have of these events. Would they not then ask—"How is it that we never heard of these things before?—why did not our fathers mention them in some way—and why is there no tradition in relation to them? Surely the want of these looks rather suspicious. If these things really happened, it is not a little singular that the world should never have heard of them till this late period." Would not this be the train of thought into which they would be led? Should not we reason thus, if a book were published now of a like character under like circumstances?

8. But we have something farther to say on this head. The reader will recollect that the historian informs us that when the resurrection took place, the watch were terrified, and some went into the city, and reported the matter unto the chief priests. When these had heard it, he says they gave money to the soldiers, and told them to say that "His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept," To this he adds, "they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is

commonly reported among the Jews until this day." Matt. xxviii. Now, it is believed that the reader will discover at once from this last sentence the predicament in which the writers would have involved themselves had their narratives been mere invention. Suppose the whole history here mere fiction—the resurrection itself, the earthquake, the fright of the soldiers, and the story they were hired to tell—suppose none of these ever happened. Now the Gospels, whenever they were published, whether ten, fifty, or five hundred years after the time at which these things are said to have taken place, state that a story was then, at the time of their publication, commonly reported among the Jews, that the body of Jesus was stolen by his disciples. But if there was no resurrection, of course no such story could have been reported among the Jews; and the falsehood of the Gospels would have been demonstrated on the spot. And how stupid must these writers have been, if impostors, to have made a statement which every body knew was false, and which must so plainly seal the condemnation of their histories. Can any man bring himself to believe that he who had ingenuity enough to invent the Gospel history, would have been so blind as not to have seen the bearing of this observation?

9. A brief illustration will show the importance of this argument. Suppose a person were to write a book pretending to be a history of certain events which happened some two hundred years ago in this country. Suppose he state in this book that one who had been put to death, rose again from the dead—that our forefathers who lived then, refused to believe it, and affirmed that his body had been stolen by his friends—and finally, that this story of the stealing of the body is commonly reported among us at this day. Should we not pronounce this pretended history false, the moment it appeared? We know that no such story is reported among us, and that we nev-

er heard of such a story before we found it in this book. It is perfectly impossible, therefore, that such a history could be palmed upon us as true. Now then we have only to make the application to the Gospel, and we shall see that it was as perfectly impossible that they could have been received, if they contained a statement which every one knew to be false. The conclusion then is certain, that this story must have been in existence at the time they were written, and must have been commonly reported among the Jews. The result to which this brings us is very plain. If this story was reported among the Jews, the history of the resurrection is true, for had there been no resurrection, there could have been no such story. The very existence, therefore of this report presupposes the fact of the resurrection, otherwise it could never have had an existence; for there can be no effect without a cause.

10. The preceding are some of the many examples\* of a like character which might be adduced to show that, had the Gospel history been false, the facts mentioned in it would have led to an immediate exposure that would have destroyed Christianity in its infancy. And we do say, without fear of contradiction, that it is wholly incredible that the New Testament, if it be a forgery, should contain statements of such a character as those named, because the writers must have known certainly that the moment their books were published the falsehood of these stories

\* Other examples may be found in the slaughter of the infants by Herod—the attempt of the people to make Christ king—the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost—the conversion of the 3000 in one day—the earthquake at Philippi—Paul's defence of himself before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, &c, &c. These are public matters, and the writers would not have dared to have stated them had they not been true; for if false, they could have been proved so, and the credit of the history destroyed at once.

would be manifest. And we do farther say that their being received and believed at all can be accounted for on no supposition whatever, but that of the truth, and not only the truth, but the general notoriety of the events of which they give an account. Had they been false, the men must have been mad to have written them ; had they been false, they would have been universally rejected as soon as they made their appearance, and Christianity would have been known now, if known at all, as a weak and clumsy imposition, which was crushed, as soon as it had birth. But since it was not so, since these histories were believed by hundreds and thousands who lived at the time they were published, and must have known whether they were true or false—the only, the necessary and irresistible conclusion is, that they are TRUE.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### EXTERNAL EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL HISTORY.

#### SECTION I.

##### ARGUMENT FROM THE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OF THE EARLY OPPOSERS OF CHRISTIANITY.

1. It is a somewhat singular circumstance, that unbelievers of the present day are not staggered at the admissions of the primitive opposers of the Christian faith. They do not, however, seem to know—or if they know, they do not consider these things. Christianity is opposed in this age by rejecting, at one bold sweep, the whole history, and affirming it to be all a fiction. Yea, those of whom we speak do not hesitate, in the unbounded confidence inspired by their remarkable acquisitions in philosophy and logic, to declare that: no such person as Jesus Christ ever lived—that he was wholly a mythological character, and that the Gospel history is nothing but a religious romance! The reader will perhaps be a little surprised at this recklessness, when he learns that the opponents of Christianity who lived in the first ages did not dream of making such wild assertions; that those who

lived just after the disciples and Apostles, never thought of denying that Christ was a real person, or that the Gospel history was true, although they unquestionably had as credible sources of information on these points as their more advanced followers of our day.

2. The argument which is based upon these acknowledgments of the enemies of Christianity who lived so near the time of Christ, is certainly one of great weight in our inquiry, and should be regarded accordingly. When we say enemies of Christianity, in this connection, we do not mean simply the heathen, or those who did not embrace the religion of the Gospel, but those who labored against it, who composed books for the express purpose of confuting this new doctrine, and who were men of learning and extensive information. Their testimony is, then, of consequence, and, in our view of evidence, goes very far to prove the truth of the Gospel history.

3. The first witness to be summoned is JULIAN. He became the emperor of Rome in the year 361. He had once been a Christian, but afterwards renounced it, and became a steady and persevering enemy of the religion of Jesus, employing all his genius and talents to crush it. The volume which he wrote against it is full of bitterness; but with all his malice, he is forced to admit the truth of the great facts of the history. He accused the Christians of that age of departing from the simplicity of Apostolic teaching in making Christ to be God; for, says he, "neither Paul, nor Matthew, nor Luke, nor Mark, ventured to call Jesus God." He grants the genuineness and early date of the Gospels—acknowledges that Christ had power over evil spirits—that he walked on the sea, as related by Matthew, Mark, and John—and indeed does not pretend to deny the miracles of the New Testament, but aims only to depreciate

them, and to show that they did not prove Christ to be so great a personage as the Christians pretended. He says, "Jesus has now been celebrated about three hundred years, having done nothing in his life-time worthy of remembrance, unless any one thinks it a mighty matter to heal lame and blind people, and exorcise demoniacs in the villages of Bethsaida and Bethany." Such is the style of his language; he does not deny that Jesus had done these things, but, like a vexed boy who sees his companion do something for which he receives applause, exclaims, "O, any body could do it." The reader will of course suppose, that, if the miracles of Christ could have been proved false, Julian would have done it; and the fact that he admits their reality shows that he had not courage to deny them.

4. In the year 303, HIEROCLES, a well-known philosopher, and prefect at the city of Alexandria in Egypt, composed two books against Christianity, in which he makes observations upon a great number of passages in the New Testament. The proof of Christianity, derived from the miracles of Christ, he attempts to weaken, not by denying that these miracles were performed—this he admits—but by attempting to show that one Appollonius had performed miracles equal, if not greater. And these, he says, were recorded, not by ignorant men, like Peter and Paul, but by Damis, a philosopher, and one Maximus of Ægis. "Now," says he, "we reckon him (Appollonius) who did such wonderful things, not a god, but only a man, whereas they (the Christians) give the appellation of God to Jesus, because he performed a few miracles." It will be seen from this that Hierocles did not presume to deny that Jesus wrought miracles, but only affirmed that Appollonius had done so likewise.

5. If we go upward to the year 270, we meet with another very learned and subtle opposer of Christianity, in



the person of the celebrated philosopher PORPHYRY. He wrote a very lengthy and labored treatise against the religion of the Christians. He was, as has been observed before, thoroughly versed in the Scriptures, and refers to numerous circumstances recorded in them, and endeavors to show that there are some things absurd and immoral, and some that are contradictory. He does not attack, however, their authenticity; he admits that the Gospels were written by the disciples, and that Christ was himself a pious man, and was conveyed to heaven, as approved by the gods. He acknowledges that Christ wrought miracles, but says that he had done it through the agency of demons. And, which is somewhat ludicrous to us of this day, he complains that the gods would not work their miracles, nor take any notice of men, because of vexation at being neglected while Jesus received so much attention. Porphyry had employed much talent and time in his attempts to overthrow Christianity, and if the miracles upon which it was founded *could* have been proved false, he certainly would have done it. And had it been possible to have shown that the Gospels were not written by the disciples of Christ, he would have shown it; for he did attempt to prove that the book of Daniel was not written by him, nor at the time stated. If there had been any chance of success in attacking the New Testament from this quarter, would he have spared it? Surely not. And the fact that he did not attempt it, is proof that he knew it would be hopeless, and therefore wisely kept silence on this point. The testimony here adduced from Porphyry, ought to put to the blush those of the present day, who are so liberal in their assertions about the authorship of the Gospels, and the miracles of Christ.

6. The next witness is the celebrated CÆLSEUS, an Epicurian philosopher, who wrote against Christianity in the year 176, and was one of the most bitter antagonists it

ever had. It will be seen that he wrote only 76 years after the Apostle John. From the works of this enemy of the faith, may be gathered a complete summary of the Gospel history. He mentions the birth of Christ; the wise men who came to worship him; the massacre of the children by Herod; Joseph's flight into Egypt with the child Jesus; the baptism of Jesus, and the descent of the Holy Spirit; his going about with his disciples, whom he calls boatmen, publicans, and wicked sailors; his healing the lame and raising the dead; his foretelling his own death and resurrection; his being betrayed and deserted by his own disciples; his crucifixion, with all the attending circumstances, the robe, the crown of thorns, the reed, the vinegar and gall; his being seen by Mary, whom he calls a fanatical woman, and his disciples; his interview with the unbelieving Thomas, &c. These facts he does not dispute: he never pretends to deny that Christ worked miracles, but he denies that these made Christ of so much importance as Christians thought him. And, to prove this, he very coolly ascribes them all to MAGIC!\* Such the manner in which the great Celsus undertook to account for miracles, the reality of which he was compelled to admit. The Infidel of the present day may smile at this weakness of his leader, but he should remember while he smiles, that this leader had too much good sense withal to deny that these miracles were actually performed, or that the Gospel history was true.

7. ACTS OF PILATE. It was a custom, and a law of the Roman government, to secure, for political and historical purposes, a careful record of all the principal events of

\* For the above facts in relation to Julian, Hierocles, Porphyry, and Celsus, we are indebted to Lardner's "Heathen Testimonies," Works, vol. vii. See also Faber's "Difficulties of Infidelity," Sect. vi

the city and provinces. Those transactions were especially noted, which had to do with the welfare of the state, its civil, religious and social policy. Those of the city were called *Acta Diurna Populi*, or *Daily Acts of the People*; or *Acta Urbis*, or *Acta Publica*,—Acts of the City, or Public Transactions. Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny, &c. make mention of these. \*

8. In obedience to this custom, Pilate, as governor of Judea, would of course keep a record of such events happening in his province, under his administration, for report to the emperor; and we should expect him to make some mention of Christ, who had been put to death by his order. That he did this, or permitted it to be done, very reluctantly, the narratives of the disciples clearly and fully show; and it is not likely he would state the fact of the crucifixion without some account of what led to it, viz: the pretensions of Jesus, the reports of his wonderful works, and the accusations of the Jews, made on oath, that he sought to make himself a king. Now, what from the nature of the case, and from the established customs of the Roman government, we have every reason to expect, we actually have. It is true, we have not the *original Acts OF Pilate*, or his reports to the home government; but we have references and appeals to them by the early Christians, showing their existence, for more than a hundred and fifty years after the time of Pilate.

9. Eusebius, alluding to this custom of the provincial governors, states as fact what we have supposed. "Our Savior's resurrection," says he, "being much talked of throughout Palestine, Pilate gave account of it to the emperor, and also of his miracles, of which he had heard report; and that, being raised up to life again after he was

\* Adams' Roman Antiquities, *The Senate*, § 6.

put to death, he was already believed by many persons to be a god.”\* That which Eusebius mentions as *reported* respecting Tiberius desiring to introduce Jesus among the gods, does not affect the question of *Pilate's Acts*. But we have other testimony. JUSTIN MARTYR, who wrote his apology for the Christians about the year 140, and presented it to the emperor Antoninus Pius and the Roman Senate, after naming the crucifixion of Christ, and some of the circumstances connected with it, makes this remarkable declaration: “And that these things were so done, you may know from the ACTS made in the time of PONTIUS PILATE.” And afterwards, speaking of some of the miracles of Jesus, he repeats the same statement. And TERTULLIAN, in his Apology for Christianity, prepared about the year 200, after setting forth some of the most important events in the life of Jesus, says: “Of all these things relating to Christ, Pilate himself, already a Christian in his conscience, *sent an account to Tiberius*, then emperor.” Now whether we adopt the *opinion* of Tertullian, that Pilate in his conscience was a Christian believer, or not, does not affect the *fact* that Pilate sent to the emperor the legal account required of him as a provincial governor. But again, in the same Apology, he makes the following affirmation: “At the moment of Christ's death the light departed from the sun, the land was darkened at noonday; which wonder *is related in your own annals, and is preserved in your archives to this day.*”

10. Now if these Acts of Pilate, or some annals containing an account of Christ, of his life and actions, of his death and asserted resurrection, had not been placed in the government archives; and if they were not in existence at the time Justin and Tertullian wrote, it is im-

\* Hist. Ecclesiast., B. II. chapt. 2.

possible they could have been so foolish and mad as to have made these statements. There was no chance for deception. They point the emperor and the Senate to their own archives. They appeal for the truth of their assertions to the government annals and records; and declare that the reports of Pilate are still preserved, and may be referred to as proof. Now the Christians were a persecuted party; the Apologies of Justin and Tertullian were composed in their defence, to secure the favor of the government. Suppose, then, that Pilate had never sent any account of these things to Tiberius,—suppose, indeed, the whole story about Christ, or all that is essential to it, is false; and that, of course, no such official reports were in existence, or ever had been,—would it not have been fatal to the apologies, and to the cause they defended? Would not the emperor and the Senate, knowing the declaration of Justin and Tertullian to be false, have taken ample vengeance on them or their friends for trifling thus with the time and dignity of the government? Would the apologists then have dared to make such an appeal, if the Acts of Pilate had not been sent to the emperor and preserved? if they had not contained the accounts alleged? Surely not; such conduct would have been perfectly suicidal on their part, and have ruined the cause they sought to defend.

11. We have then in these *Acts of Pilate* cotemporary authority of the highest character for the truth of the statements in the Gospel narratives.\* They show very clearly the time at which the miracles of Christ were said to have been performed, and the great fact of his extra-

\* The original passages taken from the Apologies of Justin and Tertullian, may be seen in Lardner's *Heathen Testimonies*, chapt. ii. Works, vol. vi. 605—620. See also the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius, B. ii. chapt. 2. The testimony of the Acts of Pilate

ordinary character, his death by crucifixion, his resurrection, &c. And though, of course, the Acts of Pilate do not prove the truth of the alledged facts, yet they show what was the common report in regard to Christ. And they present with new force the question, How came these reports at this period, if they had no foundation in fact? What originated such rumors? Something extraordinary must have happened to this crucified man, or we have an effect without a cause.

12. And it is entirely too early for the myths of Strauss to take effect. We have the reports on the spot, within a few months of the date assigned the events themselves. And, so far as appears, Pilate makes no denial of the facts, or any attempt to disprove them; otherwise the appeal to the records in possession of the government, by the apologists, would have been against them, instead of for them. For the emperor and Senate would have replied: "Yes, we find these things stated in the Acts of Pilate, as you say; but we find also a denial of their truth, and an exposure of the imposition; which shows fully that you Christians are a body of deceivers, that your very origin was in fraud and falsehood, and that you are deserving the persecutions you suffer."

13. In this way they would have been answered, if the Acts of Pilate had treated the story of the Christians with contempt, as a vile attempt at deception and imposition. The plain inference, therefore, is, that the story could not be proved false; and that Pilate, as in duty bound, stated the case as it was, and there left it. That a strong and perhaps partially favorable impression was made on his

was omitted in the first edition, but after a patient review of the arguments of both sides, we are persuaded that it ought to be received; at least so far as used in the text.

mind, seems probable both from the nature of the argument, and the narrative of the evangelists.

14. To these testimonies we have to add that of the Jews, who did not deny that miracles were performed by Jesus, but sought to account for them by other means than the power of God. Some affirmed that Jesus was enabled to perform these works by the assistance of the devil, with whom he was supposed to be in league; others attributed his miracles to the power of magic, which was believed by many in that age; and, lastly, others declared that he had stolen a secret from the temple, the pronounciation of that incommunicable name of **JEHOVAH**, and that by the aid of this he was enabled to perform all his wondrous works.\* All the prominent particulars of the life of Christ are stated as true in the Talmuds, though there is mixed up with them all manner of falsehood and abuse of Christ and his disciples. They admit also that these disciples had the power of working miracles, several instances of which are named.

\* The later Jews say that the name was written upon a stone in the temple, and that whoever should possess himself of this would be able to do any thing he pleased. They farther say that it was guarded by two brass dogs, which, should any one obtain the name, would bark so terribly at his coming out, that he could not remember it. "But when Jesus of Nazareth, say they, went in, he not only learned the letters of this name, but wrote them in a parchment, and hid it, as he came out, in an incision which he had made in his flesh; and though, through the barking of the dogs, he had forgot the name, yet he learned it afterwards from his parchment. And it was by virtue of this, say they, that Jesus restored the lame, healed the leprous, raised the dead, walked upon the sea, and did all his other miraculous works." Stackhouse's *Hist. of the Bible*, vol. vi. p. 112. Glasgow, 1796. See also Townley's *Intro.* p. 70. Grotius *de Veritate*, lib. v. § 4. Campbell's *Dissertations*, D. VII. Part i. § 15. Faber's *Difficulties*, Sect. vi.

15. The reader will now perceive that the events recorded in the New Testament histories concerning the birth, life, miracles, and death of Jesus Christ, were admitted to be true by the earliest opposers of Christianity; by those who lived at the very time, and immediately after the time, in which they were performed. They never thought of denying these facts, because they were so recent, and were of such universal notoriety, that there was no way to get rid of them. They were obliged, therefore, to acknowledge the truth of the Gospels, and the reality of the miracles of Christ and his disciples, and endeavored to account for these miracles by the power of demons, magic, &c. Now we ask the candid unbeliever if he supposes, that, had it been possible to have proved the history false, or the miracles impositions, these men would have made such acknowledgments? If ever there was a time to expose the fraud, and destroy Christianity, it was certainly at this early period, when it would have been perfectly easy to have ascertained the truth or falsehood of the whole matter. And if ever there were men who were fitted to accomplish this, they were such men as Julian, Porphyry, Celsus, and the cotemporary Jews. They were men to whom the present race of sceptical opposers are mere pigmies. They had talents and acquirements of the first order; they were men of rank and influence, especially Julian the emperor, and they had all the temporal power and means for pushing their investigations to the utmost extent; and had it been possible to have proved a fraud in any respect, they would have effected it. And yet, after all, they are compelled to admit the truth of the history, and explain its miraculous facts by magic and the aid of evil spirits!

16. Here we would frankly ask the infidel of this day to pause a moment for reflection. Let him consider the particulars now before him, with an honest heart and an



open mind, and then inquire of himself what better information with regard to the truth of Christianity he enjoys, than that possessed by Celsus, who lived so near the times of the Apostles? Let him ask what he has discovered in relation to this great question which was not known to Celsus? And lastly, let him seriously ask himself whether the confessions of those who have been named, and more particularly of Celsus, who lived so near the birth of Christianity, who was so bitter against it, and who possessed all the requisite means and the disposition to prove the falsehood, had any existed—let him ask himself, we repeat, whether the acknowledgments of such are not unquestionable, irresistible proof of the truth of the Christian history?

17. When he has duly weighed the above, we ask him to consider the following confessions of eminent modern Infidel writers. The well-known *Lord Bolingbroke* says, "The evangelists did not content themselves to give a general account of the doctrines of Jesus Christ, nor presume in feigned dialogues to make him deliver their opinions in his own name, and as his own doctrines. They recorded his doctrines in the very words in which he taught them, and they were careful to mention the several occasions on which he delivered them to his disciples or others. If, therefore, Plato and Xenophon tell us with a good degree of certainty what Socrates taught, the two evangelists seem to tell us with much more what the Savior taught, and commanded them to teach." *Hobbes* admits that he "sees no reason to doubt, but that the books of the New Testament, as we have them, are the true registers of those things which were done and said by the Prophets and Apostles." *Chubb* left the following acknowledgment: "That there was such a person as Jesus Christ, and that he, in the main, *did and taught* as is recorded of him, appears probable, because it is improbable

that Christianity should have taken place in the way and to the degree it did, (or at least that we are told it did,) supposing the history of Christ's life and ministry to be a fiction."\*

\* Leland's *Deistical Writers*, vol. i. 205, ii. 182.

## SECTION II.

### ARGUMENT FROM THE RAPID PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY ON ITS FIRST APPEARANCE.

1. In the consideration of the subject of this section we shall have several particulars which, for the better understanding of the matter, will require a separate examination. The unparalleled progress which the religion of Jesus Christ made on its first promulgation, is a fact of great interest to our inquiry, and it is a fact, we believe, which can be accounted for on no ground whatever but that of the truth of the Gospel history. If what is stated in this concerning the miracles of Christ and the Apostles be mere fiction, then have we a mighty and wonderful effect, for the existence of which no cause adequate to its production can be assigned. This will be shown in what follows, which, to render it more distinct, we shall divide into three parts or particulars.

2. First—*The character and situation of the disciples.* As we have already made some observations on this head, a few words will answer our purpose. The disciples and Apostles, with the exception of Paul, were men of low estate, their employments were of the most humble kind, as tax-gatherers and fishermen, and they could of course have had but little time for the acquisition of knowledge, or the improvement of their minds. They had been all

their lives, previous to becoming followers of Jesus, employed in supporting themselves and their families by their honest industry. It will be seen by the reader, therefore, that they could have known but very little of men and things, and that they were the last persons to be thought of for undertaking such an enterprise as the conversion of the world to any religion, much less to such as they taught. And it would seem that any person who is disposed to weigh the matter, will admit that if they were prospered to any great extent it was surely remarkable, and contrary to all that we know of the history of man: any one would admit this, we think, if he would not admit that their success must have been owing to some other power than that of their own ignorance and obscurity. Let it be remembered, then, that the first instruments employed in the promulgation of Christianity, were men of humble birth and condition, who had neither influence, power, nor knowledge of themselves, to aid them in the mighty work which they had undertaken. We come next to consider the nature of the religion which they offered to the world, and of the facts connected with it, from which it took its rise.

3. Second—*The materials with which they had to work.*

In the very outset of their undertaking, the disciples met with an insuperable difficulty, provided they had no means of establishing their cause but their own powers of persuasion. The life and death of their leader, and especially the manner of his death and crucifixion, at once threw up in their pathway a barrier of no small magnitude. The views of the Jews and Romans with regard to crucifixion, will explain our meaning, and show the strong feelings which these first preachers of the faith had to combat. Among the Jews, death by crucifixion was held in absolute horror, and they regarded him who was crucified, not only as an object of execration from men, but as

abandoned and cast off of God. The saying of their law, "Cursed is every one that is hanged on a tree," rang in their ears as the death-knell of hope and mercy to all who fell within its application. Hence they took every opportunity to cast reproach and odium upon the Christians and their religion, on account of the death of its author on the cross. "The person whom you call your Messiah," says Trypho, the Jew, in his debate with Justin Martyr, in 140, "incurred the last disgrace and ignominy, for he fell under the greatest curse in the law of God: he was crucified! And we hesitate with regard to believing one who perished so ignominiously." Such was the feeling which Christianity had to encounter on the part of the Jews.

4. The heathen views of crucifixion were equally opposed to the success of Christianity, and were calculated in every way to prevent its reception among the different people composing the Roman empire. It was a punishment inflicted only on the most notorious criminals and malefactors, and on slaves. And it is said by some, that it was not inflicted on criminals unless they were slaves; for it was thought too infamous a punishment for freemen, be their crimes what they might. It was considered by all as the most shameful and ignominious death to which a poor wretch could be exposed. In the minds of these people it was a combination of every circumstance of "odium, disgrace, and public scandal."\* Hence comes the expression of the Apostle Paul, "We preach Christ crucified—unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness."† To the nations of Greece and Rome, the idea of making one who had suffered the dis-

\* Horne's Introduction, v. iii. pp. 140—152. A. Clarke on Matt. xxvii. 35. Adam's Roman Ant. p. 230

† 1 Cor. i. 23.

graceful and infamous punishment of a slave, the author of a religion for the world, was indeed foolishness in the superlative; and they looked with pity and contempt upon the Apostles for engaging in such a ridiculous and hopeless enterprise. "From this circumstance," says Justin Martyr, "the heathen are fully convinced of our madness for giving the second place after the immutable and eternal God, and Father of all, to a person who was crucified." Such were the feelings with which the heathen looked upon the disciples of Jesus, and such the strong prejudice against which they had to contend at every step of their progress. And with such a foundation as this to begin with, we leave the unbeliever to decide what prospect there was of success, while we proceed to point out another difficulty.

5. The religion of Jesus Christ was in the very commencement at war with the long-cherished opinions, the deeply-venerated superstitions, and all the ancient and hallowed practices and rites, both of the Jews and the heathen. It began by sweeping down every other religion upon the face of the earth; it admitted of no compromise, it professed to build itself on the ruins of all others, and in unequivocal language denounced all other gods but One, and all other worship but that of the heart.

6. To the Jew it came in condemnation of his long prayers, repeated fasts, and tithes of annis, cummin, and mint, while weightier matters were omitted. Yea, more than this—it came to him with the startling annunciation that the dispensation of his great and honored prophet was at an end; that the law which he revered above all things was to be abolished, and with it all their proud pre-eminence as the chosen of God. The glory and the splendor of the temple service were to give place to the unadorned and simple worship of the humble Nazarene.

All form and ceremonies were to be done away, and broad phylacteries, and greetings in the market, were to be as forgotten things. And they were to look upon the despised Gentiles as their brethren, as children of Abraham, and heirs of the promise through faith. "All this *must* be done," was the language which the new religion addressed to the narrow and prejudiced Jew. Let the reader ask himself how far, by human persuasion alone, under these circumstances, the master or the disciples would be likely to advance, with a people who have been famed for their bigotry and exclusiveness, and for a strong attachment to their religious institutions.

7. To the heathen did this religion come in a like habiliment. It commanded them to away with their gods of brass, and wood, and stone,—to cast down their temples, and altars, and shrines, and "turn from these vanities unto the living God." It told them that all their deities were false, that they were creatures of the imagination, and that all their past worship had been folly and absurdity. The most sacred superstitions were denounced as abominations, and the practices which their fathers had honored, and which themselves had known from their youth up, their religious games, their offerings, and sacrifices, and omens, and oracles, were all given to the winds by this upstart religion. The philosophy and learning of the sages, the subtle speculations of their Platos and Ciceros, and a host of other luminaries, were given over to a like fate, and their teachers and wise men were pronounced "blind leaders of the blind." And by whom? Why, by a band of poor mechanics and fishermen from Judea! by a few obscure individuals from a nation universally despised and detested! Was such a presumption in such men to be endured by the lofty spirits of Greece and Rome? Were they to bring all their learning and philosophy, and lay it down as worthless trash at

the feet of him who had been crucified? No, they would set their faces against such unheard of daring; they would, and did, use their efforts to crush this dictatorial religion, and silence forever its advocates.

8. We have now only to ask the reader to place these particulars together,—the obscurity of the disciples, and their want of learning and influence—the horror and contempt with which both Jews and the heathen looked upon the crucified Jesus—the character and pretensions of their religion, which came in contact with the most cherished opinions and prejudices of these people, which professed on the threshold the destruction of every other religion, and thus called upon all to renounce their former gods and practices—and lastly, the sentence of condemnation which they gave forth against the philosophy and boasted wisdom of the age;—let these facts be brought together, and let it be considered that they arrayed against the disciples of Christ all the influence of learning and power, all the contempt, and hatred, and superstition of the world, and then let the question be put to the honest heart,—Is it possible that these men should have succeeded? Yet they did succeed!

9. We will not appeal to the testimony of the Gospel writers themselves, although they tell us of great multitudes who believed, even to the number of three thousand in one day. We pass these, and come to the testimony of one who was a heathen—Tacitus, the Roman historian, whose name has been mentioned before. In giving an account of the great fire at Rome, which took place in the year 64, he says that the Christians were punished by Nero, who had accused them of being incendiaries, and adds that their religion, or, as he terms it, “pernicious superstition, though checked for a while, broke out again, and spread itself not only over Judea, the first source of this evil, but even introduced itself into Rome, the com-



mon asylum which receives and protects whatever is impure, whatever is atrocious. At first only those who confessed themselves of this sect were apprehended, and afterwards, by their discoveries, *a great multitude* were convicted.”\* Here we find that within thirty years after the death of Christ, his religion had spread not only throughout Judea, but had even entered Rome, the mistress of the world, and had gained there “a vast multitude” of believers! How is this astonishing progress to be accounted for, without the admission of a miraculous power? Could the fishermen of Judea, in the face of such a host of opposition, have effected this, ignorant alike of the philosophy and language of Rome? We request the unbeliever to consider this matter.

10. We appeal next to Pliny, who, in the year 107, testifies to the great spread of Christianity, in his letter to the emperor Trajan, as follows:—“A great number of persons of all ages and ranks, of both sexes likewise, are accused, and will be accused. Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country.” He also mentions that the temples had been for a long time almost forsaken, and that no one had brought victims for sacrifices to the gods. These facts show us how widely the Christian faith had diffused itself as early as the year 107, and how effectually too, since it caused the desertion of the heathen temples and gods. This letter was written from Bithynia, a province on the Euxine or Black sea, of which Pliny was pro-consul. Lucian bears similar testimony, in the way of complaint, concerning Pontus, another province on the Euxine. His testimony is of a later date, however, than Pliny’s.

11. The last evidence will be that of the early Christ-

\* Tacit. Ann. l. xv. c. 44. “multitudo ingens.”

ian fathers, who bear witness to the wonderful advance of the religion of Jesus in their apologies presented to the Roman emperors. Justin Martyr testifies that in his day "there was no part of mankind, whether Greeks or Barbarians, where there were not some Christians, and where prayers were not offered to God through the crucified Jesus." This was at the year 140. Irenæus, who lived in the year 170, speaks of churches in Germany, Spain, the East, Egypt, and Lybia. Tertullian affirms, at the close of the second century, that Christ had been preached to all nations known to the Romans, and to many whom they had not reached with their conquering arms. He names the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phrygia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Pamphylia, Egypt, the regions of Africa held by the Romans, and those by the natives, the tribes of the Getuli and Moors, the various nations of Spain, Gaul, and Britain, of Germany, Scythia, and many unknown nations, and several unknown provinces and islands: the inhabitants of all these, he says, had heard the Gospel, and though unsubdued by the Romans, many of them had submitted to Christ.\* And all this before the year 200. Let it not be said that these are all barbarous nations; the testimony refers to civilized as well as savage people, and the witness of the Roman historian and philosopher, already given, proves its progress at Rome and in Asia Minor. Indeed, it is established that before forty years had elapsed from the death of Christ, multitudes in Judea, Egypt, Lesser Asia, Greece and Italy, the then great theatres of the arts and sciences, of learning and

\* Grotius de Veritate, l. ii. § 18, where may be found much additional testimony to the same intent.

philosophy, had embraced the religion of the crucified Nazarene. \*

12. The reader has now the whole matter before him—a religion directly opposite to the sordid views and secular interests of mankind, and at war with all the feelings, and practices, and institutions of the world—the instruments for propagating this, a few obscure and unlettered fishermen of Judea—and lastly, in the face of all possible prejudice, and in the midst of a most tremendous storm of persecution, this religion, in the space of a few years, spreading itself far and near, among all nations, civilized and barbarous, overthrowing false gods and false worship, and establishing itself upon their ruins!

13. Now, we would ask the unbeliever how he can account for this unparalleled progress and triumph of Christianity, unless the Gospel history is true? How can he solve this wonderful problem without admitting these men were aided by a miraculous power? Philosophy requires him to give to every effect an adequate cause; but if he denies the miracles of the New Testament, he fails to assign a sufficient cause. It is utterly incredible that this religion, “destitute of all human advantages, protected by no authority, assisted by no art, not recommended by the reputation of its author, nor enforced by eloquence in its advocates,” should have prevailed so mightily—it is utterly incredible that twelve poor men, artless and illiterate, should, without aid, have gone forward victorious over the fiercest and most determined opposition; over the tyranny of the magistrate, and the subtleties of the philosopher; over the prejudices of the Gentile, and the bigotry of the Jew, until the voice of their faith has been heard in every land, until at last, through their labors, their followers, to use the language of Gibbon, “erected

\* Newton on the Prophecies, Diss. xviii. Part 1.

the triumphant banner of the cross on the ruins of the Capitol" of Rome.

14. We appeal to the good sense and candor of the Infidel to say, whether such a religion, with such advocates, could have obtained such triumphs without the help of God? We ask him only to look at this as a reasonable man, to consider all the facts, and as a reasonable man to decide, whether its astonishing success, if there were no supernatural agency, is not of itself a greater miracle than any recorded in the New Testament?

15. Suppose twelve men, companions of some criminal recently executed in some one of our large cities, should all at once start up in the midst of us, and affirm that he had risen from the dead, and that before his execution he had performed many wonderful works; as restoring the lame, the blind, and deaf and dumb, and giving life to the dead: suppose farther, that they declare themselves to be gifted with the power of speaking all languages, and the power of working miracles; all which we know to be absolutely false—and suppose, once more, that they proceed to preach these things to us, and to others in all parts of the country; is it probable that they would convert us, that they would make us and thousands in every direction believe that he who had been hanged was risen from the dead—that he had wrought all these astonishing wonders in open day and before vast multitudes, and yet that no one had ever seen or heard of them before? Is it probable or possible, that these miserable men could make us believe these things, and still more, that they themselves were working the most stupendous miracles before our very eyes, while all the time we knew that the whole was a palpable, outrageous falsehood?

16. Yet this is a case exactly parallel to that of the first propagation of Christianity, if the Gospel histories be not true. The Infidel is forced to admit these astound-

ing absurdities in relation to the disciples of Christ; he is forced to admit "that a great number of people on a sudden, and without any reason, upwards of seventeen hundred years ago, took it into their heads to believe, that they were eye-witnesses to many miracles which never happened—that they were even themselves the subjects of miraculous operations which they never experienced, and that they persuaded thousands of others to believe the same," and this notwithstanding they all knew, at the same time, that it was false!

17. But we need not press this farther. The astonishing progress of Christianity under all the disadvantages which have been named, and in the face of persecution, chains, imprisonment, and death, can never be accounted for, except upon the truth of the Gospel history. And it is believed, that any one who will divest himself of all prejudice, and look upon these things with the calm eye of Reason and true Philosophy, cannot turn away without the conviction that there was at work here a more than human Power, that the spirits of these poor peasants and fishermen of Judea were baptized into the wisdom of God, their tongues unloosed, and their hands strengthened with the might of miracles.

### SECTION III.

#### ARGUMENT FROM THE SUFFERINGS OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS.

1. THE sufferings of the early Christians almost exceed belief; for it is difficult to bring ourselves to credit the unwelcome fact, that men could be so nearly transformed into demons as were the persecutors of the meek and unoffending followers of Christ. No evil that can be imagined, no punishment which it was possible for the most fiendish to invent, was left untried against these poor people, and every engine which the hatred and vengeance of their enemies could command, was set in motion to crush them and their detested religion.

2. The Jews, according to Justin Martyr, sent persons into all parts of the earth to denounce the Christians as impious and heretical. Their Rabbis pronounced curses against them in the synagogues, and solemnly charged the people to hold no intercourse with them. They seized every opportunity to accuse them that they might be put to death, and hesitated not at all to swear to the most abominable falsehoods against them. At the hands of the heathen they fared no better. They were described as the most abandoned of men; the most unnatural and revolting crimes were charged upon them, as feeding upon

human flesh, and after the horrible repast, extinguishing the lights and indulging in the foulest deabuchery.\* Domestic were solicited to give evidence against them, and murders were purposely committed by others that the Christians might be accused; and for this purpose their children and wives were put to the torture, that in their agony they might drop something to furnish matter of charge. But they went farther than this.

3. Mr. Gibbon, who will not surely be charged with exaggeration, holds the following language:—"If the empire had been afflicted with any recent calamity, a plague, a famine, or an unsuccessful war; if the Tiber had, or the Nile had not, risen beyond its banks; if the earth had shaken, or if the temperate order of the seasons had been interrupted, the superstitious Pagans were convinced that the crimes and impiety of the Christians, who were spared by the excessive lenity of the government, had at length provoked the Divine Justice. The impatient clamors of the multitude denounced them as the enemies of gods and men, doomed them to the severest tortures, and required with irresistible vehemence that their leaders should be apprehended instantly and cast to the lions." This testimony of Mr. Gibbon is fully established by the testimony of the heathen writers themselves, as will be seen in the following.

4. Tacitus tells us that when the calamity of the great fire fell upon Rome, Nero "inflicted the most exquisite tortures upon the Christians." "They died in torments, and their torments were embittered by insult and derision. Some were nailed on crosses; others were sown up in the skins of wild beasts, and exposed to the fury of dogs; others again, smeared over with combustible materials,

\* Lardner's Jewish Testimonies, c. II. Works, vol. vi. pp. 388—392.

were used as torches to illuminate the darkness of night. The gardens of Nero were destined for the spectacle, which was accompanied with the games of the circus, while Nero mingled with the multitude as a charioteer." And all these horrible sufferings were heaped upon them, he says, "not so much for the crime of burning the city, as for their hatred of human kind." To these punishments to which the Christians were subjected, the poets Juvenal and Martial are supposed to allude, as they both speak of the garments of pitch and sulphur, which the latter calls "the troublesome coat," making himself merry with their torments. Epictetus, the philosopher, and Marcus Antoninus, the emperor, speak of the obstinacy with which the Christians died; that is, their firmness. Pliny bears witness also to the sufferings and death of the Christians.\*

5. The whole matter is thus thrown together by Horne:—"By the magistrates they were subjected to heavy fines, their property was confiscated, and they made to suffer a variety of ignominious punishments, which to generous minds are more grievous than death itself. They were imprisoned and proscribed; they were banished, they were condemned to work in the mines; they were thrown

\* Some notion of the terrible slaughter of the Christians by their heathen persecutors may be gathered from the startling fact that in the persecution under Diocletian, which commenced in the year 303, "not fewer than 17,000 suffered death in one month! In the province of Egypt alone, no less than 144,000 are said to have died by the violence of their persecutors, and 700,000 through the fatigues of banishment, or of the public works to which they were condemned." See Townley's Intro. p. 33, and especially Mosheim, cent. iv. P. I. c. i. For further particulars see Gibbon's Decline and Fall, c. xvi. Paley's Evidences. Horne's Intro. v. i. 350. Christian Examiner, v. ii, pp. 330—332, New Series. *Grotius de Veritate*, l. ii § 19.



to be devoured by wild beasts, or made to fight with them in the theatres for the diversion of the people; they were put to the rack; they were placed in red-hot iron chairs; they were crucified, impaled, burnt alive;—in short, they were subjected to all the torments which cruelty and barbarity, refined and inflamed by revenge, could invent;—torments, the bare mention of which, excites horror in the human mind.”

6. Now suppose the Gospel history a fiction, and the disciples impostors, and we have before us another problem which no human ingenuity can solve. How can it be accounted for, that these men should fearlessly and with unshrinking firmness, encounter such dreadful and tremendous sufferings, unless the facts of the Christian religion be true? Can it be possible that the disciples would have submitted to be tortured, and put to death in every way, and with all possible cruelties, if they knew that they were testifying to falsehood, and confession would save them? Would they have endured all this long train of evils and horrors for the purpose of keeping up an imposition, for the support of which they could have had no earthly motive? an imposition which from the beginning had brought them only stripes, imprisonment, chains and racks? Would they affirm what they knew to be utterly false, that Christ had risen from the dead, and die in attestation of the falsehood, when truth would have secured to them life, and wealth, and honors? And would thousands of their followers declare that they had seen them work miracles, and submit to the terrible tortures inflicted by Nero, and to a death of the most excruciating agonies, rather than reject what they were satisfied from the beginning was a base and wicked lie? Have impostors ever before or since done the like? We ask the unbeliever to pause here also, and see if he can reconcile this conduct of the Apostles and first Christians with the known

principles which govern mankind in their pursuits. Let the question be put,—“Is it conceivable that Human Nature must not have been tired out with going on, day after day and year after year, for a whole life-time propagating a known falsehood, by which they were to gain nothing but contempt, misery, torture, and death?” Let him ask himself if he would get up a falsehood, the belief of which by others could be of no possible benefit to him, and then for years suffer all the pains of imprisonment and torture, and at last be wrapped in pitch and burned to death, when to have confessed the useless fraud would have saved him from the whole. And if he knows he would not do it, let him account for it, if he can, that not one, or two, or a few only, but that hundreds and thousands of the first Christians should do this.

7. It will not do now, to avoid the difficulty, by saying they may have been deceived. This is impossible, from the very nature of the case. They did not testify to mere opinions or speculations, about which it is probable there may have been mistake; they declared that they had *seen*, and *heard*, and *known*, that of which they spake. They bore witness to facts about which there could have been no deception. The feeding of multitudes with a few loaves and fishes; the restoring the blind, and deaf, and dumb, with a word; the raising the dead; the controlling the elements;—these were things in which there was no chance for mistake, they were objects of sense. And they could not have been deceived with regard to Christ; they certainly knew whether they had seen him, and conversed with him, and sat at table with him—and by their own account they were not very credulous in this respect, for one of their number would not believe until he had seen the hands, and feet, and put his own hand into the side of his crucified Master. Nor could they have been deceived in relation to themselves, for

they did most certainly know whether they were gifted with the power of speaking in unknown tongues, and of working miracles. Concerning these things deception was impossible, and the disciples, therefore, were not deceived.

8. Neither will the plea avail any thing, "that many enthusiastic people, in different ages and countries, have exposed, and do expose, themselves to the same difficulties which the primitive Christians did ; and are ready to give up their lives for the most idle follies imaginable." In the first place, this is not strictly true, for no people of any age or country ever suffered to the extent that the first Christians suffered. That many have submitted to death rather than give up their honest opinions, is freely granted. And what does this prove ? That they firmly believed those opinions to be truth. We do not contend that it proves the opinions true, but only that they believed them true. But surely every man of discernment must perceive that there is a vast difference between opinions and facts ! The disciples and first Christians suffered and died, not merely because they believed, but because they *knew*, because they had seen, and heard, and performed themselves. Their attestation, therefore, was to *facts*. If a man affirm that he believes that the earth is square, and lays down his life rather than yield this opinion, we should consider this as sufficient proof of the reality of his belief. If then the disciples tell us that they *saw* a man blind from his birth restored to sight, that they *saw* one who had been dead four days restored to life, and if they submit to torture and death rather than deny this, it is the strongest proof that can be given of the reality of these facts.

9. The conclusion to which we are brought is plain and necessary. That the disciples and first Christians should have voluntarily given themselves to trials, and

sufferings, and death in its most horrible forms, for the purpose of perpetuating what they all knew to be a vile, impious, and useless imposture, is at variance with every known principle of human nature, opposed to all our experience of mankind, and utterly impossible. Therefore, these things can only be accounted for on the ground of the actual occurrence of the events of which they testify, and consequently the truth of the Gospel history.

## SECTION IV.

### ARGUMENT FROM EXISTING INSTITUTIONS.

1. It is a well known truth that several observances are kept at this day by Christians as memorials of certain facts recorded in the New Testament history. Among these are the *Lord's Supper*, and the observance of the *First Day of the Week*—the first of which professes to be commemorative of the life, sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ; and the second of his resurrection from the dead. Now, we consider these institutions as absolute demonstrations of the truth and reality of the events of which they are commemorative; because, unless they actually took place, there is no rational way in which to account for the existence of said institutions. And we wish much that the unbeliever would patiently examine this particular, and, if he refuse to believe in the works, death, and resurrection of Christ, to give a reasonable explanation of the manner in which these observances came into being among Christians.

2. As an illustration of the argument to be drawn from this particular, let us suppose that the Infidel takes upon himself to affirm, that the story of the existence of the great and beloved Washington is a mere fiction, that no such person ever lived, or if he did, that he never per-

formed the works that have been ascribed to him—suppose he pretend to make this assertion; would it not be immediately asked of him, how the people of this country came to observe the twenty-second day of February as his birth day? If such a man as Washington never lived, how is it possible that this observance should have taken place? But if it be admitted that he lived, yet did not perform the deeds which he is said to have performed; still we ask, how came the people to celebrate this day in memory of him? If the history of his career is all a romance, and he was nothing but an ordinary citizen, it is passing strange that the people should have taken it into their heads that he was a great man, the Father of his country, and this for no manner of cause whatever! It must be seen then, we think, that the very fact of the observance of the day in question, is demonstrative proof that Washington lived, and acquired great fame with his countrymen by the works which he did.

3. Another similar example is found in the celebration of the fourth day of July, as the anniversary of our national Independence. There is no way to account for this celebration, except upon the ground that the history in relation to this matter is true; that on this day, 1776, was made the declaration of our Independence. If no such event ever took place, then no reasonable answer can be given to the question, Why do we observe this day with rejoicings? No explanation can be given of the origin of this celebration, and it is, and must always remain, utterly unaccountable that the people of this country should have universally received the false impression, that their fathers had proclaimed themselves free, and had by a long and trying war secured their liberty. But rather than be reduced to this extremity, every one, it is believed, will admit, that the celebration of the fourth day of July pre-supposes the truth of the history in connection

with it; because otherwise such celebration could not have come into being, and have been received on this ground by the people of this country.

4. We have only to ask now, that the application be made to the standing institutions of the Christian religion mentioned at the commencement of this section. If the Evangelical records are rejected, how shall we account for the existence of the present celebration of the Lord's Supper? There must have been some reason for this observance; Christians would not surely have begun or established this for nothing. If, then, the cause assigned by the Gospel histories be not the true cause, what is the true one? Will the unbeliever, by an appeal to the pages of history, point out to us the real origin of this institution? will he bring forward from this source, what he believes to be the true cause, and the evidence for his belief? And when he has done this, we shall require him to show the time and manner in which the Christians came to adopt their present views of this institution; to show why the true cause of its being observed should have been suddenly and silently dropped, and a false one substituted in its place; and to show, farther, why we have no records or traditions respecting this remarkable change.

5. The same observations made here in relation to the Lord's Supper, may, with equal propriety and force, be made in relation to the First Day of the week. As already stated, this day is kept by Christians every where in memory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Now, if no such event ever took place, how came Christians to take such notice of this day? If the whole story is mere fiction, without the least foundation, how, in the name of propriety and good sense, could this institution ever have begun? What reason could have been assigned for their conduct, by those who first started it?

And if they gave a reason, why has not that reason been given from that time to this ? How should it happen that some new reason, such as we have now, should all at once have been assigned as the real origin, and Christians all over the world should have so quietly acquiesced in this change, without asking the propriety thereof ? It appears to us, that these questions must serve to place the matter in its true light, and to show that these institutions are unanswerable evidence of the actual occurrence of the events of which they are commemorative. There is no other way to explain consistently their existence. Things cannot have a being without some cause, and especially such definite institutions as these. It is not an easy matter to conceive of various nations in all parts of the world agreeing together, or rather without any agreement, determining, all at once, and for no manner of reason, to keep certain observances as memorials of things which never had an existence, or of events which never took place. Yet, this must be conceived, and believed, or it must be admitted that the Gospel history is true.

6. It will answer no purpose to say here, that these institutions may have been established long after the time at which the events that they commemorate are said to have taken place, and, therefore, that it was easy to impose them upon a credulous people. If the supposition of their late date were correct, the conclusion would by no means follow. Could we be made to believe that another George Washington lived some three or four hundred years since, and performed sundry mighty acts in behalf of his country ? And could the people of this country be so far influenced by any man, or body of men, as to be persuaded to observe the twenty-third day of February in memory of him ? And again, we ask, How long would it take to make us believe that one of the pil-



grim fathers rose from the dead in 1630, and to observe the second day of the week in commemoration of this event? It will be seen, we imagine, that it would be no easy task to impose such a story, and such an institution in proof of it, upon ourselves, or upon any other people. The impossibility of such a thing clearly shows the weakness of the objection or theory in question. But this is not all; there is yet another failure in this supposition.

7. The books of the New Testament bear witness that these observances were kept from the beginning, by the very companions and disciples of Jesus. If this was not true, whenever the attempt was made to establish them, it must have proved fruitless. For, the persons upon whom it was designed to practice the imposition, would immediately point to these books, and say, "These books of yours tell us that the institutions which you call upon us to observe, have been observed from the days of Christ, and yet this is the first time we have ever heard of them. How is it, then, that this is all new to us? Have we been for years past doing these thing without knowing it? Really, we cannot think ourselves so stupid; and yet we must admit this, or your books are plainly false." Would not the people, of necessity, think and reason in this way; and would not the imposture be exploded at the outset? It appears to us that this result would most certainly follow, and it would seem, that it cannot appear in a light very different from this, to any one who will carefully examine the matter.

8. There is but one other evasion which deserves to be considered. It may be said that these observances might have been in existence among the people, and some designing person may have induced them to believe that their origin was such as it is now believed to be. But this is also attended with difficulty. It takes for granted

that thousands and millions of men had long been in the habit of attending to these celebrations, and that very frequently, for no reason and with no object. They met together on the first day of every week, and they faithfully observed the ceremony of eating of the bread and drinking of the wine with peculiar solemnities, without ever knowing what they did it for. Now we cannot readily persuade ourselves that such multitudes of people of all nations, and in such widely distant countries, should, without a cause, take it into their heads to observe these things, and should chance to hit upon exactly the same method and manner of doing it. As well might we contend that the people of this country were in the practice of firing cannon for thirty years or more, on the fourth of July, without knowing why they did it; when fortunately some one came along and told them that it was because that was the birth-day of their freedom, and, believing this, they have continued to fire them from that time to the present.

9. The conclusion to which we must come, after these considerations, is evident. These institutions are commemorative of the life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ: they profess to have commenced at the time the events, of which they are memorials, took place; and they have been continued from that time to the present. Now, these things are wholly inconsistent with any conceivable imposture; their existence can only be accounted for by admitting the reality of the events in question. This admitted, the truth of the Gospel history follows as a necessary consequence.\*

\* Leslie's Short Method with Deists is the best work on the subject of this section ever written, and is altogether unanswerable. The writer lays down four marks or rules which are "incompatible with any imposture that ever yet has been, or can possibly be."

I. We have now arrived at the close of our investigation ; and if the reader has gone with us, step by step, through the whole, he will readily call up in his mind the following positions :—

1. **THERE IS A GOD.** It was shown that neither the laws of Nature, nor the eternity and inherent properties of matter, were, separately or together, adequate to the production of the phenomena with which we are surrounded ; and that we were therefore necessarily led to a Supreme Intelligence. Direct proof of this was brought from the beautiful and perfect mechanism of the human body as a whole—from the admirable contrivance displayed in its several parts—from the wonderful harmony and arrangement of the planetary system—and from the benevolent adaptation of the natural world to the wants of man.

2. **A REVELATION REASONABLE AND PROBABLE.** This shown from the parental character of God—his wisdom and goodness,—from the wants of man—and from the insufficiency of the light of Nature as a guide.

3. **NECESSITY OF A REVELATION.** This shown from the state of the world before, and at the time of, Christ's coming—the errors and abominations of its Philosophy, Jurisprudence, Religion, and Morals.

4. **CHRISTIANITY PRECISELY WHAT WAS WANTED.**—This shown from its perfect adaptation to the condition of the world at the time of its appearance—in the cor-

An attempt was made by a sceptical gentleman in Scotland to find an imposture having all these four marks ; but having examined the history and religion of all nations, and having for twenty years been on the inquiry and search, he at last gave it up as a hopeless task. The work is what it professes to be, a "Short Method," containing about forty pages, and should be read by all, believers and unbelievers.

reaction of the errors above mentioned, and the substitution of right views of the true God, and of human duty.

5. THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY. 1st. *Historical Evidence.* The great foundation facts of Christianity proved by an unbroken chain of history from our own day to that of Jesus Christ—and the genuineness of the books of the New Testament proved in the same way, by following them up to the disciples themselves. 2d. *Internal Evidence.* Many of the facts recorded in the Gospel history, had they been false, must have destroyed Christianity in its very birth—the age unable to have produced such a religion—and the character of this religion wholly inconsistent with imposture. 3d. *External Evidence.* The unparalleled progress of Christianity—the admissions of its early opposers—the sufferings of its first teachers—and the existence to this day of institutions commencing with the very occurrence of certain events in the Gospel history, of which they are commemorative.

II. Such are the results to which we have been brought by our inquiry. The arguments that have been employed we have endeavored to state in a fair and candid manner, and we have been careful not to force them beyond their respective limits, nor to draw from them any illogical or improper conclusions. Many sound and weighty arguments have been omitted, because to have introduced them at length would have swelled the volume beyond its intended size. But without these, it is believed that sufficient has been advanced to satisfy the reader, that the claims of Christianity as a Revelation from God, are such as are not lightly to be passed over.

III. If he who is reading is an unbeliever, we ask the liberty to urge him, with something of earnestness, to pause a little, and reflect upon what has been said. He cannot deny, we think, that much important evidence has been adduced in support of the truth of the Christian re-

ligion—that many strong proofs of this have, in the course of the preceding observations, been laid before him; and in view of this, we request him, as a candid man, to put these questions to himself:—Can this evidence be destroyed? Can these proofs be denied? If not, what is the course I ought to pursue? We request this with all sincerity, for we verily believe, that, if he presses these questions upon his candor, and forces himself to give a reasonable answer to them, he will come to the conclusion that Christianity is the truth of Heaven.

## CHAPTER IX.

### OBJECTIONS ANSWERED. THE QUESTION OF MIRACLES.

#### INTRODUCTORY.

IN strictness of speaking, we are under no obligations to consider the subject embraced in the title of this chapter ; because, until the positions established in the preceding pages are destroyed, all objections are out of place. It is in vain to raise supposed difficulties to a few isolated passages, and on the strength of these to pronounce the Gospel history even doubtful, while the great chain of historical evidence continues unbroken—while the mass of internal and external proof offered in support of its authenticity remains untouched. As well might one attempt to destroy the giant oak by cutting away a few sticks of shrubbery about its roots, while he leaves the trunk unharmed. Such attacks, we repeat, are altogether ineffectual—they do not reach the question at issue ; and the sceptic has made no progress in the overthrow of Christianity, until the arguments in its behalf are fairly met and fairly answered—until the historical facts by which it is established, and, with these, the very foundations of human knowledge, are all prostrated in the dust. Until he has accomplished this, every objection must fall short of the mark.

2. Notwithstanding this position is so perfectly plain, it is a well-known fact that no attempt has been made to meet Christianity on this only proper ground. No unbeliever has ever yet attacked the Christian records by attempting to disprove, step by step, the historical evidence adduced in their support.\* This is a field on which the opposers of the Gospel have never been disposed to enter, for they are well aware that they cannot maintain themselves here. They have been urged and exhorted, again and again, to take position here: the Christian has repeatedly affirmed, that this is the only fair and honorable way of deciding the question, and he has pledged himself to rest the matter upon this point, and here to abide the issue. But to these earnest calls there is no answer; to these continued solicitations for a fair trial, the only reply has been, a studied silence. And why is this? Plainly from a consciousness that failure must inevitably follow such an attempt.

3. But this is not all. Though he refuses to meet the question where it can only be met to any purpose, he still continues to throw out his objections to Christianity, as if they were sufficient to falsify the voice of all past history. Though he knows, or ought to know, that these very objections have been refuted, and refuted over and over, he nevertheless advances them now with all the confidence of originality, as if they were entirely new, and had for the first time been published to the world. The truth is, that the great mass of these objections, with one or two

\* The nearest approach that has been made to this, perhaps, is the work of Strauss, recently translated and published in England. The theory on which the argument of it rests will be examined in the next chapter. We are told that the plates of the English edition have been sold to a publisher in Philadelphia, and that an American edition may be looked for soon. 3 vols, 8vo.

exceptions, are as old as the days of Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, by whom they were first started, and from whom they have been borrowed by succeeding sceptics down to the present time. Answers to these have been published from fifteen to sixteen hundred years, and republished, as often as have been the objections, and yet not the least notice has been taken of them, and no attempt has been made to prove them unsound. What then shall we think of men who, with these facts staring them in the face, will continue to bring forward these threadbare and exhausted objections to Christianity, as if they were new? Is it honorable? Is it a manifestation of that spirit which seeketh after the truth? We would not speak harshly, but we do think we have reason to complain of a want of fair dealing.

4. However, with all this, we are disposed to go over the ground again, that there may be no failure on our part, and no cause of complaint on the part of the unbeliever. It will therefore be the object of the following chapters to examine some of the difficulties, and to point out the weakness and insufficiency of some of the more common objections to the authenticity of the Gospel history, or the truth of the facts therein related.



## SECTION 1.

MIRACLES AND THE LAWS OF NATURE. WHAT ARE THE  
LAWS OF NATURE? WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

1. A habit of close and connected thinking and reasoning, and a correct use of language, are important acquirements, the attainment of which is a sufficient reward for all the labor and discipline it may require. But though this is very generally allowed, it is seldom we meet with the exactness so desirable in this respect, and so essential to the development of truth. And nowhere, perhaps, is this fact more apparent, than in the theological and philosophical discussions and inquiries of the present time. There is an affectation of metaphysical acumen, of deep research, of nicety and scientific accuracy in the use of language, while at the same time, nothing is more glaring than the exceedingly loose and vague manner in which words and terms are employed ;—nothing more absurd than the grave and self-satisfied air with which illogical conclusions, jumped at from false premises, are set forth as the established and unquestionable results of a rigid and scientific analysis of the subject in hand.

2. The discussion of the question of miracles furnishes a fair illustration of this. In connection with this subject, there is much talk of “nature,” “laws of nature,” “viola-

tion of the laws of nature," &c. And it is to be feared that, mostly, these expressions do not represent any fixed and clearly defined thought or idea; but are employed in a vague, misty way, as indicative of some kind of power, the character and source of which is little understood, if at all. Now to enable us to arrive at any results valuable to the cause of truth, we must first endeavor to affix some precise and definite value to this kind of phraseology. As a foundation to our inquiry, we shall seek to accomplish this here, in the outset. Of course we write for the theist, or the believer in the existence and government of a God—and not for the atheist, reasoning with whom the argument would take quite another form.

3. What then do we mean by nature? Reduced to its simplest form, the answer may be stated thus: The external universe, with all its collocations and arrangements; including all the forms and dispositions of matter, and also all the elements of the human mind and body.

4. We often speak of nature as intelligent and active. We say nature does this, or produces that, or brings about such a result. There is, perhaps, no objection to this use of terms, if in the mind the words are kept subordinate to facts. It is common to transfer the action or power of the principal to the agent. We say of a general, he defeated the enemy, he conquered the territory, &c. In a subordinate sense this is true; but strictly, following the stream to its source, it was the government which did this. The general is nothing without men and means. The government, which stands behind and above him, and furnishes aid and strength, men, armament and food, is the actual power; and uses him and his as instruments to accomplish its purposes. So nature, in this sense, may be said to do this or that, to work out certain results; but we should be careful not to confound the instrument with

Him who uses it ; careful not to set up nature in the place of God, in place of the infinite Mind that lies behind it, and moves it, and works through it.

5. And now a word respecting the laws of nature. On this point there is a large measure of talking and writing which seems to regard the laws of nature as intelligent active agents, having force in themselves. Nothing seems more unreasonable, or displays a more vague use of language. What do we mean by law ? Surely not an active agent, not power ; but only method, a rule, a way of doing anything. There is no force in the law itself. It is not a cause, but an effect ; and implies mind, plan, will, as its source. For example : we have a law relating to the collection of taxes and customs, a law respecting the election of officers and magistrates. These laws are nothing of themselves ; but simply the expression of the will of the people or the sovereign, which is the cause of their existence : and they may be repealed on a change of circumstances, or in the regular expected progress of affairs, and new ones substituted. They have no force in themselves to collect revenue or taxes, or to cast votes, or cause it to be done. They simply prescribe the method in which these things shall be done, the rule by which the desired result shall be obtained. The power to do lies behind them. And, indeed, that law of itself has no active force, is confessed by the appointment of what is called the executive power, the governor and magistrates ; whose duty it is to see the law executed, or the particular business or act done in the way and manner set forth.

6. So with any piece of machinery : a steam engine, for example. The laws of the machine are only the method or order according to which it operates. They have no power to move the machinery, no power to set it in motion, or, when this is done, to keep it in motion.

The moving power, which in this case is steam, is entirely independent of the laws of the machine. And, what is worthy of note, the moment this power is withdrawn, the machine stops ; and with all its laws, is perfectly helpless, dead and useless.

7. So with the laws of nature. They are nothing more than the method in which, or the rule by which, given results are brought about in the physical, moral and spiritual worlds—as the revolution of the planets on their axis, and round a central controlling body ; the transmission of light and sound through the atmosphere ; the growth, maturity, and decay of animals and vegetables ; the action of the elements, so called ; the development of the mental faculties, and the social sentiments and passions. Here we have certain results. The laws of nature are the method or manner according to which they are brought about, but they have no power or force in themselves to produce these results. The producing power, or the cause of these results, is the infinite energy or will of God. Without him these effects could not come about. Withdraw his all-sustaining and acting energy from nature, and the whole fabric would fall into helpless and shapeless ruin. It is the pressure of his omnipotent will upon the universe that keeps it in existence, and its wheels revolving.

8. I may not know how it is that the mind or will of God acts thus directly on physical nature ; but that it does is certain. I do not know how it is that my will acts upon this right hand, with which I am now making record of my thoughts ; but that it does act is perfectly clear. I write with it, raise it, extend it, do what I please with it, by a simple act of the will. It is a mystery which no man can explain. The method is unknown, but the fact is indisputable. We may talk learnedly of brain, nerves, muscles, &c., but it is only a vain attempt to conceal the fact, that we cannot penetrate to the real source of the

mystery, or detect the secret of the spirit's action on matter, or of its connection with it. So we cannot explain how God acts on nature, or through it; nevertheless, we feel that it is the pressure of his infinite will that keeps the machinery running; while the laws according to which it runs, which laws he has imposed upon it, are only the method in which he brings about determined results and events.

9. Nature, then, has no laws but the laws of God; or, in other words, the laws of nature are the rules by which God works. Indeed, following the inquiry to its last analysis, there is but one law, supreme and universal, viz., the original plan of God; the system according to which in the beginning he proposes to accomplish his purposes. This is the highest, the first the and last; and all other laws are subordinate to, and are but partial exhibitions of, this one all-comprehending law. This law reveals itself in various ways, but though the forms are manifold, the spirit and purpose are one. There may be "diversities of opinions, but it is the same God that worketh all in all."

10. This being the case, then the universe in all its developments and operations is but the outward expression of the mind or will of God; the material embodiment or utterance of his thought, in the same manner that a machine is the material expression of the thought and intention of the inventor. From a careful examination of the machine, from understanding its workings, its uses and ends, we discover the purpose of the inventor, the particular object he sought. And when in operation, we find it works according to the laws of its construction, and produces, in the prescribed way, such results as he pre-determined and willed it should produce. The nature of its structure, the relation of its parts, the laws or method of its working, and the character of its productions, are all of

the maker; as it were, his thought crystalized, taking a material form.

11. So from an examination of the structure and arrangements of the universe, from the faculties and endowments of man, and his position and relations in the scale of being, we discover, so to speak, what thought was in the mind of God at the time he entered upon the construction of the present order of things. And from the workings of the machinery of nature, from the character of its laws, and the results of its action, we learn what he wills to be at the present, or any given period of time. For whatever developments may take place, whatever phenomena may be evolved by the workings of nature, we know that they are but an expression of God's mind, or of what he wills then and there to come to pass. Or, in other and more direct terms, we learn from these phenomena what God is doing at the particular point of time in question. And thus the universe, with all its laws and results, as a whole and in all its parts, is but the visible speech of God, the shadow of his infinite mind and will!

12. If, then, this position may be regarded as established, it will be allowed that it would not be correct to say that a miracle is a violation of a law of nature. For, if the laws of nature are only the mode or rule of God's operations, the plan according to which he works out his purposed ends; then to call a miracle a violation of a law of nature, is equivalent to saying it is a violation of the plan of God. In point of fact, there can be no such thing as a violation of a law of nature, for it has no laws but the rule or manner of God's action. If it can be shown that God has performed a certain act, or done a certain work, then the way, the particular manner, in which the work was done, constitutes the law of nature for that particular work or occasion. If there is any truth or force

in the reasoning which has preceded, then this conclusion follows of necessity.

13. Let it, then, be established that a given event has taken place, that a miracle has been wrought, and it must be admitted that it is according to a law of nature, which is only the method in which God works. And the miracle itself is only the outward expression of the thought of God, the physical utterance of his will or purpose at that particular time in reference to the particular result involved. To say, therefore, that a miracle is a violation of a law of nature, seems to be a false view of the character and meaning of a miracle, and of the true relation of the laws of nature to the mind of the Deity.

14. So also, to say that a miracle is impossible, because it is a violation of a law of nature, is assuming to know definitely all the methods in which God does work, or can work ; all the ways and means in the universe, by which he may accomplish any given result, or reach any proposed end. This no one can do, unless he is omnipotent and omniscient, unless he has fathomed the depths of the infinite mind, and measured the extent of its resources and the field of its action. Until we have attained to this, we have no right, at least it is somewhat presumptuous, to affirm that a miracle is impossible in the nature of things ; and that, therefore, every account of a miracle, wherever found, must of necessity be resolved into a myth or a falsehood. It is quite probable that God has not yet displayed all his power, nor revealed to us all his thoughts and purposes, and all his methods of action ; and until he does, it will surely be becoming in us to maintain a reasonable degree of modesty in our assertion of what is impossible ; or what is contrary to the laws of nature, which are only a mode of divine action.

15. But, when carefully examined, what is the real value of the expression, " violation of the laws of nature ?"

Well, when divested of all assumption, and reduced to simple matter of fact, it means no more than this: that a given event, or miracle, has never taken place within the circle of our experience; that during the few years we have lived, no such phenomena have been evolved by those laws of nature that lie within the extremely limited sphere of our knowledge and observation. This is all it can mean truly and legitimately; for we cannot affirm or deny anything respecting the operations and results of the laws of nature, or what is the same thing, the acts of God, during the ages prior to our existence on the earth; or in the boundless regions lying outside the sphere of our present knowledge and examination.

16. One who had lived under the equator all his days, and knew nothing of nature or its operations in other latitudes or under other circumstances than those which surrounded him, when told that water sometimes became so hard and solid that men could walk upon it, would very likely say it was impossible, contrary to, or a violation of, the laws of nature. But this, in reality, would only prove that he had never witnessed such a phenomenon, that he had never seen God display his power or will, through nature, to the production of such a result. So when told that water, without being brought into the specific condition here alluded to, or in other words, while in a liquid state, could be made to bear, and had actually borne the weight of a man, so that he could walk upon it, as Jesus, for example; he might say again that it was impossible, and in violation of the established and invariable laws of nature. But in this case also the assertion would prove, not that it was impossible, or a violation of any law of nature, but only that he had not seen such a thing; that within the limits of his observation God had never so manifested his power or given expression to his will, through the elements of nature. This is the entire



value of the assertion, and to extend its meaning beyond this is only assumption without proof.

17. The same remarks apply to other natural phenomena. One who should be told for the first time, that a shower of stones had fallen from the sky, would, without doubt, promptly deny the possibility of the thing, as in direct contravention of the established order of nature. So, if we were entirely ignorant of all the laws and effects of magnetism or electricity, and were told that a piece of iron had risen of itself from the earth, and, rushing upward, fastened itself to another piece of iron, or iron ore, and contrary to the action of its own weight, remained suspended in the air; we should at once affirm that such a thing could not be, that it was contrary to the universal law of gravitation, and that the witness had either stated a wilful falsehood, or was himself deceived. And if under the same circumstances of ignorance, we were assured that in five or ten minutes a message had been conveyed to a distance of a thousand miles, we should without hesitation pronounce it an impossibility, and laugh the believer of such a story to scorn.

18. But as the case stands, it is clear that all our scoffing and denial, all our bold assumptions of the impossibility of such events, and of their violation of the laws of nature, would be reduced to the simple fact that we had never seen or known such events, and that we were not acquainted with any principles working in nature adequate to the production of such phenomena. Or, in other words, meaning the same, we had never witnessed the power and purpose of God displaying itself in this particular way.

19. So again, if we should be told, that a small loaf of bread had been suddenly made to increase in size and substance sufficient to feed several thousand men and women; or that certain men had suddenly begun to speak

fluently in languages of which, up to that moment they were wholly ignorant; or that a man, actually dead, had been instantly raised to life again,—if these things should be stated to us as real occurrences, as historical facts, we might deny that they ever took place, and pronounce them absolute impossibilities; because contrary to, and in direct violation of, the fixed and unchanging laws of nature. And of the authors of such statements, we might add that, however honest they might be, they were grossly deceived and could not be believed. But in this, as in the other examples, our assertion of the impossibility of such events, when stripped of its verbiage and pretensions, amounts only to a confession of ignorance. It is simply saying we know of no law of nature, no method of divine action, or operation, tending to such results. No such events have fallen within the circle of our experience or knowledge. We have never seen God working through nature to such ends, to the producing the particular and special effects in question. This is all we say, or can say, strictly and logically. For to affirm that such results are really and absolutely impossibilities, is virtually to affirm that God cannot do these things, that his will is not able to express itself in this way. Few, perhaps, would be willing to take this position. To say that he can do such things, but that he never has done them, is only bald assertion, without the least shadow of evidence in its support; and cannot be put in plea against the testimony of those who affirm that God has done these things, that he has expressed his thought and will in the ways named, and that they themselves saw and heard.

20. And here is a point in our inquiry, worthy of some thought. If the foregoing reasoning be allowed, then there is no argument or objection, *a priori*, against a miracle on the score of impossibility, or its opposition to the

laws of nature. No valid reason, founded on the extraordinary character of the events, can be offered in evidence to show that such events have not taken place, or could not take place. The question, then, as to their actual occurrence, is, after all, narrowed down to the single point of testimony, the credibility of the witnesses who solemnly affirm that they have themselves seen these things.

21. Nor does it seem strictly in place to say that, the possibility of miracles admitted, their actual occurrence cannot be allowed, until it can be shown that the occasion, on which they are said to have occurred, was sufficient to justify, or call for, such action on the part of God, such an exhibition of his power and will. For this would be setting ourselves up as judges of what it would be fit and proper for God to do on particular occasions. It is virtually assuming to be acquainted with every possible conjunction of circumstances under which a miracle would be justifiable. Now it is quite possible that the necessity for a miracle might exist, and yet we not be able to discover it; or, if pointed out to us, to appreciate it. It is quite possible that God might see occasion for such action on his part, while the circumstances and influences which go to make up the occasion, might lie entirely beyond the orbit of our observation and comprehension.

22. While, therefore, a miracle has no inherent impossibility in its nature; and while it must be confessed that we are not competent judges of the necessities or occasions which may justify such exhibitions of the divine energy and will; we fall back again to the simple position, that the question of their actual occurrence must be determined by the character and credibility of the witnesses in the case.

23. And it is worthy of note, that extraordinary events,

or those supposed to be in direct conflict with natural laws, have come at last to be believed solely on the ground of testimony. The strength of the evidence has gradually overcome our belief of their repugnance to nature, notwithstanding the affirmation that testimony is variable and nature invariable. The fact that water sometimes becomes hard enough to walk upon; the falling of stones from the skies; a piece of iron rising from the earth of itself; the sending a message and its answer a thousand miles in a few minutes; the passage of a vessel without sails or oars, against wind and tide twenty miles an hour; these things have been believed by the mass of mankind wholly on testimony, and that too against the conviction of their seeming impossibility and opposition to the laws of nature. The discovery that they were consonant to nature, and possible, did not precede the belief of them, and cause them to be received on testimony. But they were first received on testimony, and this as a cause, operated to the conclusion that, in some way, they were brought about according to natural laws. Even now we know nothing of the origin of falling stones; nor do we know anything of the real essence of magnetism, or how, or why, it produces the wonderful phenomena in question; yet we implicitly believe in the reality of the phenomena—most of us on the testimony of others.

24. We return, now, to the position, that a miracle is conformable to the laws of nature, which are the methods in which God expresses his will, or works out his purpose. It will be said, then, if these events are according to natural laws, then they are not miracles, are of no force or value as credentials of divine authority, because any one knowing these laws may work them. But this depends entirely on the meaning we attach to the word miracle. It is necessary, therefore, that we should determine the

exact value of this term : and know, when it is employed, the precise and definite thought represented by it. Setting aside, then, all merely metaphysical niceties, we mean by a miracle, a special work wrought for or through man, by superhuman means, or by the power of God. It must not be an ordinary or usual occurrence, because the very purpose for which it is wrought, implies that it is special. And the superhuman element is not of itself enough to make good the definition ; for the revolution of the earth on its axis, the power of a steam engine, or an earthquake, is superhuman, but not miraculous in the sense implied. The work must, therefore, be special, occasional, and wrought for man, or through him as an instrument ; and by means which are beyond or above the ability of man.

25. As an example to the point, we will take the raising of the dead. It will be allowed, I suppose, on all hands, that an occurrence of this sort would answer to the above definition. Indeed, the denial that such an event ever took place, on the ground of its impossibility, and in violation of the laws of nature, implies this admission on the part of those who make such denial. For if such a thing were within the power or capability of man, then there would be no propriety or force in the denial of the New Testament record of such occurrences, on the alleged grounds, viz., their impossibility, or opposition to the regular and established order of nature. The raising of the dead, then, will be allowed to be a miracle in the sense of the definition given.

26. To this definition of a miracle, however, it will probably be objected, in the outset, that this special action on the part of God, is virtually confession of an after-thought with him. It will be said, that it implies that certain circumstances have come about, certain exigencies have arisen unexpectedly, which cannot be met in the usual

way, by the ordinary operations of his government; and that, therefore, the original arrangements being defective, a special provision or action must be introduced to meet the difficulty, and answer the want.

27. For the better conclusion of the argument, we think it well to consider this supposed objection here. We reply, then, that no such inference is implied in the statement. It is of course admitted, and affirmed, that the particular circumstances in question, or exigencies, so called, were foreseen in the beginning by God; and that they were provided for in the very way herein set forth; namely, by that specific kind of action called miracle. No new thought or plan of action, is supposed to have arisen in the mind of God. At a particular period of time, a particular or special effect, intended in the original arrangement of things, is to be brought about. When that time arrives, a new antecedent or cause is introduced in that particular direction, namely, the operative will of God; and the desired effect follows, the dead are raised to life.

28. Let us illustrate this by reference to the watch, as an example. The object of this instrument chiefly is to measure time. This is the purpose of its construction. But on examination, we find connected with it an alarm apparatus, the object of which is to awaken its possessor at a given hour of the night or morning. Now, as remarked, the main design of the watch is to measure time; but here is also a special arrangement introduced into its original structure, to meet a special want foreseen by the maker. It operates, of course, in harmony with the structure of the watch, and according to its laws; but the particular time when it shall operate, and the power that shall set it in motion, are entirely independent of the machinery and its laws, and lie in the will of its owner.

29. Let us take another example. Entering a cotton mill, and examining the machinery, we discover the purpose of it; we behold a physical expression of the design and will of the inventor; which is the production of cloth. But on looking round we discover also an arrangement, by drums and bands, for producing, at particular times, a special result, to wit, the revolution of a filing apparatus, or a turning lathe. This was provided for in building the machinery, and when in motion, is carried by the same power, obedient to the same laws. But the application of the power at any given moment is outside of the machinery and its laws, and is the effect of another cause, viz., the direct action of man; and, without this cause, the machinery might run forever, if it would last so long, without the special result in question being obtained. And observe that this special action does not conflict with any of the laws of the machinery, or of the motive power. It is simply a new antecedent, followed by a new consequent; a particular direction of power to a specific end, which, when the occasion has passed, ceases; while the general causes and laws prevail, and the rest of the machinery goes on, uninterrupted, as before.

30. So in the case in question. It is granted that, as a general law, when men die they remain dead—or, in other words, that, under ordinary circumstances, the dead are not raised to life again on this earth. When, therefore, this takes place, it is the effect of a special cause, viz., the will of God acting in that particular direction, at that particular time, to the production of that precise result. The old causes, so to speak, operate as before, without interruption. The dead generally do not rise in the alleged way. But under the new set of circumstances induced by the new cause, particular dead do rise, as was intended by God, and provided for in the beginning.

31. Having now disposed of the objection grounded on the speciality of a miracle, we return to the definition; that a miracle, though according to the laws of nature, is, nevertheless, wrought by superhuman power, or by the power of God, and is a work peculiar to him, whatever the agency or instrument by which it is performed. There is no force, therefore, in the assertion, that if miracles are wrought according to natural laws, they are not credentials of divine authority, inasmuch as any one who shall become acquainted with these laws may do the work. Nor can it be allowed as philosophical or logical, that the race in the progress of ages will become sufficiently developed to work miracles, by force of their knowledge of the supposed powers of nature, and of the relations of spirit to matter. This conclusion does not follow from the premises; and can only be adopted by those who, in their reasoning, confound the idea of power with the idea of method.

32. The laws of nature, as we have seen, are only the method in which the will of God acts to its purposed ends. It does not follow that a knowledge of these laws, or this method imparts power also. I may know the manner, or the law, according to which God works: but it would be very hasty to conclude that I can therefore do the work which God does. Knowledge in this case is not power. For example; it may be granted that the raising of the dead is, in method, perfectly accordant with all the laws of spirit and body, and conformable to the established principles of their organic association, and the elements of physical life; and I may attain to a clear understanding of the process by which the spirit is reunited to the body—but with all this, the power to do the great work may be infinitely beyond my reach. Nothing is more obvious than the fact, that the knowledge of the manner in which the dead are raised, does not involve the



power to raise the dead. The last is quite distinct from the first.

33. Again ; I may by diligent study come to a knowledge of the law of attraction, by which the moon affects the rise and fall of the tides ; but I cannot for this control the rise and fall of the tides, or adjust the moon's place so as to produce the results in question. So I may understand the process or law by which the elements might be restrained, and a tempest suddenly reduced to a calm ; but yet this knowledge might not be one step towards the possession of the power necessary to produce the desired equilibrium in the atmosphere—the power which could say to the winds and waves, “ peace, be still ;” and be obeyed.

34. It is important in our inquiry that a proper distinction should be had in respect to the principles involved. We should avoid all confusion both of ideas and words. A law of nature, as we have seen, is only the method in which certain results are brought about. The power which works out these results is quite distinct and independent of the law or method. And even if it be allowed, that the race of man may progress so far in future ages, as to become acquainted with all the laws according to which miracles are wrought ; still they may be just as far from the power to work them, as they are at the present moment.

34. If, now, the ground of the argument is changed, and the power to work miracles is predicated, not of the mere knowledge of the laws of nature, but of the moral and physical perfection of man ; still the position seems equally without proof. So far as the severity of argument goes, it remains to be shown that there is any logical or natural connection between a perfect physical and moral organization, and the power to work miracles. Unless this can be established by satisfactory evidence, the bare

supposition, or assertion, that it may be so, cannot be received as decisive of the question.

26. It may reasonably be doubted whether any degree of physical or spiritual development to which man can attain, is necessarily followed, as a consequence, by miraculous power; by an ability, or energy to control the elements, or raise the dead. So far as there are any facts that may be legitimately employed in such an inquiry, nothing appears to indicate that those remarkable in this respect have made any approaches to the use or possession of such power. The lives of Howard, Fenelon, Oberlin, and others who walked near to God, present no example of the presence of this divine energy; no consciousness on their part of the smallest beginnings of such power resident in them.

27. But if the views of the source and nature of miracles presented in the preceding inquiry be correct, then there is no reason to expect such power on the part of man, as the product of a perfectly developed human nature. Miracles are the prerogative of God; and his omnipotent will is the only power adequate to their production. Man, so to speak, is but the instrument on whom, or through whom, the work is wrought out. Of himself he can do nothing. The infinite Mind worketh in him to will and to do; giving, withdrawing, or withholding the power, at pleasure, according to his plan and purpose. There can be no such thing, therefore, as man being developed in any, or all his faculties united, up to the point of miraculous power; no such thing as the race ever progressing to an equality with God in this respect. Whoever, therefore, is endowed with the power of miracles, gives, it would seem, conclusive proof that he is a chosen instrument of Heaven; that God is with him, and works in and through him the fulfilment of his purposes, whether known or unknown to us. His works are witnesses of

his divine authority and commission, on the simple ground that no man could do these works if God were not with him, acting in him and by him. Miracles, therefore, are credentials of a commission from God ; and unquestionably whosoever presents these credentials, justly calls upon us to believe in him, and receive him as the special messenger of the Father.

28. A single point remains to be touched. If the foregoing argument presents the true philosophy of miracles, then if Christ is sent of God, we may reasonably expect that the ground which he takes in reference to his miracles, will not only conform to it, but will go directly to confirm its truth and correctness. This, on examination, will be found to be the case. It seems beyond question, that those who allow the purity and integrity of Jesus Christ and his knowledge of the source of his power, must confess that the principal argument of this section, as well as the point just presented, are abundantly illustrated and established by his words and conduct. He makes no pretensions to any power of his own, inherent in him, as the necessary product of the regular and progressive development of his nature. He does not claim to do his works through force of his purity, of his moral and spiritual perfection. He does not seem conscious of any miraculous energy, or extraordinary ability, springing from this source independently of all influences without or beyond himself.

29. So far from this, so far from claiming to work his miracles on any such ground, from any power inherent in himself; he distinctly and repeatedly disavows the idea, and refers all his power and his works directly to God, as the operative agent. There is scarcely a point in his whole life on which he is more explicit than on this. The citation of a few declarations to this effect, will abundantly justify the statement, and exhibit the true

relation of Christ to his miracles, and the true relation of himself and his miracles to God.

30. "I can of mine own self do nothing." (John v.) Is not this a strange declaration if he felt the miracle his own? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth; and he will show him greater works than these." (Ver. 19, 20.) "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." (John xiv.) In these passages Christ declares in the most emphatic and unqualified manner, that he does not work of himself, or by his own power, but by the given power of God, who dwelleth in him. Nay, he goes so far as to say that it is not himself at all, but the Father that doeth the works in or through him. This is the fact we have endeavored to elucidate; that the miracle is not of the man, but of the will and infinite energy of God, who is the real author of the work; and that, therefore, no mere development of the powers and faculties of man, no human moral or spiritual perfection, involves the power of performing such a work.

31. The same idea set forth in the language just quoted, is expressed by Jesus on other occasions in less direct terms. And he affirms the same fact in regard to his revelations of divine truth; referring everything to the Father. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has annointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor," &c. (Luke iv.) "If I cast out devils by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." (Matt. xii.) "I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." (John vi.) "I have not

spoken of myself; but the Father who sent me, he gave me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. . . . Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." (John xii.) "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me." (Chap. xvii.) "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me." (xiv.) "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me." "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. . . . Ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God." (viii.) "Many good works have I showed you from my Father." (x.)

32. Now, it cannot well be supposed that Christ would so often make such direct and unqualified assertions, that neither his words nor works, neither his revelation of divine truth, nor his miracles, were his own; if he had felt or believed that they were results of his own superior knowledge of the laws of nature, or the natural product of his own powers and faculties, highly or perfectly developed; or the effect of any spiritual force having its source in himself. It can scarcely be believed that he would so positively and repeatedly have ascribed his knowledge of his Father's will and purpose, and his miracles, directly to that Father, if he had been conscious all the while that they were only the flower and fruit of a perfect physical and moral organization, of a high degree of spiritual purity, of a powerful human will. It is manifest that Christ regarded himself as only the instrument through which God communicated the truths in question, and wrought the miracles. Hence his unequivocal denial of any inherent power of his own sufficient for the production of the results which were brought about. Hence his positive asseveration, "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."

33. It appears, too, that the disciples of Christ, and others, fully understood him in this respect; for they distinctly affirm the same thing, that his miracles are wrought by God, or by the power given of God. They do not think of ascribing them to any physical or spiritual perfection of Christ, or to any natural force of his own. "God annointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power." (Acts x.) "Ye men of Israel, hear these word: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him." (Acts ii.) And his resurrection is also referred to the power of God. "Whom God has raised from the dead." (Acts iii.) "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." (ii.) These declarations show very clearly the views of the disciples respecting the source of Christ's power and wisdom; and it is evident that they had no thought of these being his own, the product of spiritual energy inherent in him. They ascribe all to God; and, as Christ had done, affirmed directly that "God did" the works himself.

34. If we follow the inquiry in reference to the disciples themselves, we find the same principle involved, and the same acknowledgments made. There seems no good reason for believing that these men, who, previous to their call to follow Christ, were not distinguished for any extraordinary powers, were more developed physically, intellectually, or spiritually, than any others in the same walks of life. And they do not pretend to any such thing; nor after their call do they claim any miraculous energy of their own.

35. The Savior had told them that whatever ability they possessed in this respect, would be given them of God. "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you." (Acts i.) "I send

you the promise of my Father upon you ; but tarry ye in the city until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke xxiv.) "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John xiv.) "It is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father, which speaketh in you." (Matt. x.)

36. In perfect accordance with this declaration of Jesus, we find the disciples referring their miracles, not to their knowledge of natural forces, or to their own moral power ; but to God, either directly, or through Christ. When the lame man was healed, Peter says to the wondering multitude, "Why marvel ye at this ? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk ? The God of Abraham," &c. (Acts iii.) Here is a positive denial that the healing was done by any power of their own, or through force of any holiness, or moral and spiritual development of their own ; and it is ascribed directly to the will or energy of God, manifested through Christ. "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul." (Acts xix.) "Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them." (xv.) "There are diversities of operation, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. . . . To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom. . . . To another gifts of healing, to another the working of miracles : but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." (1 Cor. xii.) "God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own will." (Heb. ii.) "And now, Lord, grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak

thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal ; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus." (Acts iv.)

37. These passages point very clearly to the fact, that the disciples did not regard the power of working miracles as resident in themselves ; and hence the prayer that God would stretch forth his hand to heal, and grant unto them the witness, through these works, that he was with them. And it is written in the closing portion of Mark's Gospel — "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." They never think of claiming these works as the natural results of their own spiritual development ; the effect of physical and moral force in themselves. God was the author. They were the instruments. He wrought by their hands, or through them. He gave them "gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his own will." All flowed from his infinite will and energy ; and however diversified the operations or miracles, it is "the same God that worketh all in all."

38. As we have said, this is the proposition with which we started, and which we have endeavored throughout to illustrate and establish as the true philosophy of miracles. And, in conclusion, if the inquiry has been properly conducted, the following results are obtained.

I. The laws of nature are only the method in which God acts, or gives outward expression to his thought and will.

II. A miracle, then, is not a violation of the laws of nature, which, as said, is but a mode of divine action ; and, therefore, on this ground, no exception can be taken to the possibility of a miracle.

III. But a miracle, though according to natural laws, is the product of a superhuman power ; a special work of God, directed to a special end. He, therefore, through or



by whom the miracle is wrought, furnishes proof that God is with him in a special manner.

IV. This special working, however, on the part of God, does not imply any defect in his original plan of conducting the affairs of the universe ; for this working, or the miracle, was intended and provided for, and made a part of that plan from the beginning.

V. A miracle, then, being the direct result of the operative will of God, there can be no such thing as the human race progressing to a degree of goodness and purity, to a knowledge of the laws and forces of nature, or to a perfection of physical and moral organization, that as a cause, will be necessarily followed by the ability to work miracles, as an effect. Or, in other words, there can be no such thing as man being spiritually developed up to the point of miraculous power. This is a prerogative of God alone ; a power residing exclusively in him.

This view of the source and nature of miracles is confirmed by Christ, who in the most unreserved and emphatic manner, disclaims all power in this respect, as inherent in himself ; and ascribes his miracles directly to God, who works in him and through him. His disciples affirm the same thing of him, and of themselves ; declaring that God wrought the miracles by them ; and that without him they were nothing and could do nothing.

## SECTION II.

### HUME'S ARGUMENT AGAINST MIRACLES.

1. THOUGH we have touched on the principle embodied in Mr. Hume's celebrated argument, in the preceding section ; yet we have thought it best to give it a separate examination, because of the great importance attached to it by his followers. It is well known that the argument has been considered as the strongest, and, by many, as an unanswerable objection to the miraculous part of Christianity. Nevertheless, it has been answered, and its sophistry so clearly exposed, that Hume himself confessed defeat. This acknowledgment was made in relation to the celebrated "Dissertation on Miracles" by Dr. Campbell, of Edinburgh ; having read which, Hume very frankly declared, "The Scotch theologian has beat me ;" and in his letter to Dr. Campbell declined any reply, on the ground that he had resolved never to notice any attack on his works. Notwithstanding this acknowledgment of Mr. Hume himself, his followers have continued to repeat his arguments with as much coolness as if nothing of the kind had ever taken place, and with as much confidence as if no answer had ever been attempted.

2. Mr. Hume's argument is this,—“ Experience is our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact. Variable experience amounts only to probability—invariable experience, to certainty. A miracle is a violation of the

laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, can not be surmounted by any proof whatever from testimony, because this is variable. There is, therefore, and ever must be, a balance of evidence against miracles."

3. At the first glance this argument seems to amount to a demonstration, but upon examination it will be discovered that there is no small share of assumption about it.

4. First, it assumes that human testimony is always variable. This we deny: because testimony is variable or uncertain in some cases, it by no means follows that it is in all. Under ordinary circumstances it may be variable in ninety-nine cases in a hundred; yet under certain given circumstances it may be invariable, being precisely the same in every instance of the hundred or thousand. Now, we affirm that the testimony to the miracles of the New Testament is invariable; for no instance can be adduced in which, under the same circumstances, human testimony was known to be false. It was never known that men have endured a life of toil, persecution, and suffering, and at last submitted to torture and death, in attestation to what they all knew to be an absolute falsehood. We repeat it—no such instance can be adduced from the records of history or human knowledge. Our experience of testimony, then, under these given circumstances, is invariable, and hence Mr. Hume's argument, based as it is upon a false assumption, falls to the ground.

5. Again, Mr. Hume says, "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature." This is likewise assumption; not easily proved, as we have seen in the section preceding. A miracle may be out of the common course of nature, and yet may in no wise be opposed to it. We grant that it is out of the common course of nature, but it remains to be proved that it is a violation of nature, or of any of its

laws. A man of Mr. Hume's philosophical knowledge should have remembered, that modesty is never out of place when speaking of nature and its laws. Every day is teaching us a lesson of humility in this respect; and every new fact which we gather from nature, serves but to show us how little we know as yet of her laws, her powers and resources, and how much there remains to be known. It becomes the philosopher, then, to be less confident in his assertions as to what is, or is not, a violation of the laws of nature. Until we know all her laws, and powers, and secrets, it would be more modest for us to suspend judgment in this respect; and it is believed, that as the pages of creation are interpreted to us, we shall find cause to think this reserve not unwise.

6. Mr. Hume says again, that "miracles are contrary to experience." This is also assertion, and not only assertion, but, as Mr. Hume and his followers ought to see, a bold assumption of the very point in debate. Christians and Jews have ever affirmed, that miracles are not contrary to experience; they steadily declare that they have been performed, and have been witnessed by thousands and hundreds of thousands. It is for Mr. Hume, therefore, to prove, not assert, that they are contrary to experience. We beg to be excused from taking his, or any other person's mere assertion as authority here; the question is too important to be decided by mere declamation.

7. If it be said that a miracle is contrary to *our* experience, we still dissent on the ground of an improper use of terms. To say that a certain event is contrary to, or contradicts experience, because we never experienced it, is a false use of language—it is mere sophistry. "Strictly speaking, the narrative of a fact is contrary to experience only, when the fact is related to have existed at a time and place, at which time and place, we being present, did not perceive it to exist; as if it should be asserted that,

in a particular room, at a particular hour of a certain day, a man was raised from the dead, in which room, and at the time specified, we being present, and looking on, perceived no such event to have taken place. Here the assertion is contrary to experience, properly so called; and it matters nothing whether the fact be of a miraculous nature or not." \* This is a true statement of the question, and all this talk about miracles contradicting our experience, is but an attempt to confuse with indefinite and ambiguous terms. If it be said that we have not experienced such events, or that they are not *generally* experienced by others, we readily grant it, and it proves nothing when granted. It is no argument against miracles that they do not occur every where, and at all times. Every day miracles would be no miracles at all, so far as any beneficial effect is concerned; for their universal occurrence would destroy the very object of them.

8. Again Mr. Hume says, "the laws of nature are invariable." How does he know this? Has he lived from the beginning of time, and been acquainted with all the laws and operations of nature? If not, how does he know, how does any one know, that they are invariable, or that they have been established by "a firm and unalterable experience?" He can only speak for his own experience, he can only testify to the invariableness of the laws of nature within the small compass of his own observation, which is but a little spot of earth in England, and of that only for the few years of his life. With regard to all the rest of the earth, and the universe, he knows nothing of this invariableness, and can therefore affirm nothing—with regard to all past ages he knows nothing, and can therefore affirm nothing, except what he knows and affirms upon the authority of testimony.

\* Paley's Evidences,—Preparatory Considerations.

9. And here it is, if we mistake not, where lies, at least, one grand fallacy in Mr. Hume's argument. He says that the laws of nature are invariable, but human testimony is variable; and hence as miracles depend upon testimony, there is, and always must be, a balance of evidence against them. Now, as has just been shown, all we know of the invariableness of the laws of nature, excepting only that small portion which comes within our own personal observation, is derived from the testimony of others, and, therefore, from a source which, according to Mr. Hume's own statement, is variable. This, if we are not deceived, destroys the foundation of his argument, inasmuch as the invariableness of nature on the one hand, and miracles on the other, do both depend, so to speak, upon testimony. The following syllogism will show this more clearly :

Testimony is variable, and can never amount to a certainty;  
 The evidence for miracles depends upon testimony ; *therefore*,  
 The evidence for miracles can never amount to a certainty.

This is Mr. Hume's side of the question : testimony cannot amount to a certainty for miracles, while the invariableness of nature amounts to a certainty against them. But it has already been shown that this invariableness itself depends upon testimony; and the following syllogism will show how near it amounts to a certainty against miracles.

Testimony is variable, and can never amount to a certainty;  
 The evidence for the invariableness of the laws of nature depends upon testimony ; *therefore*,  
 The evidence for the invariableness of the laws of nature can never amount to a certainty.

10. The reader can judge now of the strength of Mr. Hume's argument, and decide how great is the balance of evidence against miracles derived from the invariableness

of the laws of nature. And having done this, he will go with us one step farther, and complete the process. The above argument has proceeded upon the admission that all testimony is variable, merely that Mr. Hume's objection might be met on its own ground. It has been previously established, however, that testimony under certain circumstances is invariable, and that the testimony for the miracles of the New Testament was of this character, because it was never known that men endured a life of constant peril, deprivation, and suffering, and at last submitted to torture and death, in attestation to what they knew at the same time to be absolute falsehood. Now Mr. Hume allows that invariableness amounts to a certainty, and hence the following syllogism seems to settle the question.

Testimony of a given character is invariable, and consequently amounts to a certainty;

The testimony for the Christian miracles is of this given character ; *therefore*,

The testimony for the Christian miracles amounts to a certainty.

11. What has now been said may, perhaps, serve to show that the strength of the argument in review lies in words more than in things. The truth is, we do believe testimony, although contrary to our experience, or in other words, when there is a want of experience, on our part, in relation to the events which the testimony is designed to establish. We do every day act upon the very principles which the argument in question denies. Here then is the conclusion—Mr. Hume's theory is destroyed by actual practice, his speculations are all exploded by stubborn facts ; and, in spite of his metaphysics, men will be men, and will continue to believe, in the very teeth of his celebrated argument.

### SECTION III.

FALSE OR COUNTERFEIT MIRACLES. HUME'S SELECTION  
EXAMINED. THE CURE OF A LAME MAN, AND OF  
A BLIND MAN BY VESPASIAN; THE CURES  
WROUGHT AT THE TOMB OF ABBE PARIS.

1. It is often said, that there have been false miracles from time immemorial, and that this very fact renders the miracles of the Christian religion suspicious, if it does not form an objection against them. But this is altogether gratuitous: as well might one say that vice renders virtue suspicious, or constitutes an objection against its reality. It is granted that there have been false miracles, but to say, therefore, that there never have been any true miracles, is as reasonable as it would be to say, that there is no genuine coin, because there is some spurious—that there is no real modesty and chastity, because there is a great deal of counterfeit.

2. The false miracles which are brought forward, are of a very different character from those which were wrought by Christ and his apostles; and one, who will make a comparison between any of these pretended wonders of which he may have heard, and the works of Jesus, will find that they are altogether too distinct ever to be mistaken for each other. Take, as an example, the



miracles of Mahomet, or such as were attributed to him; and a moment's examination will show the contrast between them and those of the New Testament. They were performed in the night; secretly, either by himself, or in the presence of his friends; were not objects of sense; were not permanent;—and the same may be said of nearly all other pretended miracles, with the exception of some few, which are attributable to physical causes. On the other hand, the miracles of Christ were done openly, in the presence of enemies, before vast multitudes, and were of such a character as to preclude the possibility of deception—as feeding the multitudes, giving sight to the blind from birth, raising the dead, &c. No false miracles ever had these characteristics, and therefore form no objection against those of the New Testament.

3. Besides, no false miracles have ever been subjected to the severe test which the Christian miracles have successfully passed through. They were wrought in the most civilized and polished countries, in an age distinguished for its learning and for a spirit of inquiry, and when there was wanting neither power nor inclination to expose any fraud which might have been practised or attempted. “And it may be presumed that men who were so much interested in detecting the imposture, had there been any, as the Jewish high priests and rulers, and also as the heathen priests, philosophers, and magistrates, (some of whom immediately, and all of whom very soon took the alarm at the rapid spread of Christianity, being in the highest degree exasperated at it,) and who had every possible opportunity for examining the credentials of Christ and his apostles, would have taken the most effectual methods to prevent the growth of a religion that was so exceedingly offensive to them, which was to destroy the credibility of their miracles, which they asserted to have been wrought, and to be at that very time wrought

in its favor.”\* This they attempted ; they examined them with the closest scrutiny, and being unable to question their reality, resorted, as has been stated, to the use of the ineffable name Jehovah, demoniac agency, magic, &c.

4. It is of no consequence that false miracles have been believed ; because they were mostly not of such a character as to admit of re-examination. They appeared, as it were, and then vanished, and credit was given them on the impulse of the moment, which credit, had an opportunity presented for investigation, would doubtless have been destroyed. In some instances examination was prevented from fear of those in power. Christ’s miracles were wide from this ; they were permanent, and would admit of repeated investigation. The blind, and deaf, and dumb, and diseased, who were restored, and the dead, who had been raised to life, were afterwards among the people probably for years, and could be seen and conversed with, as they were, until the reality of the miracle was put beyond question.

5. And it is a consideration of great importance that the early Christians took this very ground against their opposers. Quadratus, whom Eusebius calls a “disciple of the Apostles,” and who only twenty-three years after the death of John presented an Apology in defence of the Christians to the emperor Adrian, makes the following appeal :—“The works of our Savior were always conspicuous, for they were real. Both they that were healed, and they that were raised from the dead, not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards ; not only while he dwelled on this earth, but also after his departure and for a good while subsequent to it—insomuch that some of them have reached to our own times.”—†

\* Priestley’s Institutes, Part II. c. i. § 3.

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical Hist. Book iv. chap. 3.

Now, if the miracles of Christ were not real, and the fact here stated true, must not Quadratus have been incomparably foolish to have needlessly convicted himself by such bold appeals to what every one knew was false?

6. Justin Martyr in the year 140, Tertullian in the year 200, and Origen in the year 230, make use of the same argument in relation to the permanent character of the miracles of Christ, affirming that they were such as to be seen, and known, and examined of men. The fact, therefore, that false or spurious miracles have been credited, is no objection to Christian miracles, because there is no parallel between the two cases. The latter were of such a character as to admit of no mistake, they were abiding—the subjects of them lived for years among the people, open to constant examination, and thus excluding all possible chance of deception.\*

7. But let us take some example of false or pretended miracles, and examine a little into the grounds of their pretensions. Fortunately Mr. Hume himself has made a selection for us. Out of the immense mass of wonders of this sort, he has taken three instances, which, of course, were the best he could find; and these he regards as having equal, if not stronger claims, than those of the New Testament.

(1.) The alledged cure of a blind and of a lame man at Alexandria in Egypt, by the emperor Vespasian; reported by Tacitus. *Hist. Lib.* iv. 81.

(2.) The restoration of an entire limb of the door-

\* But suppose we grant that all religions have had their miracles, so called; how does it happen that only the Christian miracles ever accomplished any thing? If these pagan miracles were genuine, or Christ's were false, then why did not the first produce the same effects with the last? There is a most manifest difference in the results on Society,—whence is it?

keeper of the Spanish Cathedral in Saragossa, Spain; mentioned by Cardinal Retz in his Memoirs.

(3.) The cures said to have been wrought at the tomb of the Abbe Paris, about the year 1730.

8. The *second* example seems to be beneath the notice of such a shrewd writer as Mr. Hume. It is naked assertion on the part of the cardinal, not even of what he saw, but only of what he was told. No examination is made to verify the statement. No proof is offered; and the cardinal himself did not believe it. This, therefore, needs no answer.

9. The *first*, the cure of the blind and the lame man at Alexandria, by Vespasian, is of a different character; but the circumstances under which it is said to have been performed, are widely different from those under which the New Testament miracles were wrought. The account given by Tacitus will show this. It is as follows:

10. But the principal instance noticed by Mr. Hume and his copyists, and which he affirms to be the best attested in all profane history, is that of the miracle said to have been performed by the emperor Vespasian at Alexandria, in Egypt, in curing a blind man by means of his spittle, and a man who was lame in his hand by the touch of his foot. The transaction is thus related by Tacitus:—"One of the common people of Alexandria, known to be diseased in his eyes, by the admonition of the god Serapis, whom that superstitious nation worship above all other gods, prostrated himself before the emperor, earnestly imploring from him a remedy for his blindness, and entreating, that he would deign to anoint with his spittle his cheeks and the balls of his eyes. Another, diseased in his hand, requested, by the admonition of the same god, that he might be touched by the foot of the emperor. Vespasian at first derided and despised their application; afterward, when they continued to urge their petitions, he

sometimes appeared to dread the imputation of vanity; and at other times, by the earnest supplication of the patients, and the persuasion of his flatterers, to be induced to hope for success. At length he commanded an inquiry to be made by the physicians, whether such a blindness and debility were vincible by human aid. The report of the physicians contained various points; that in the one, the power of vision was not destroyed, but would return, if the obstacles were removed; that in the other, the diseased joints might be restored, if a healing power were applied; that it was perhaps agreeable to the gods to do this; that the emperor was elected by divine assistance; lastly, that the credit of the success would be the emperor's, the ridicule of the disappointment would fall upon the patients. Vespasian, believing that every thing was in the power of his fortune, and that nothing was any longer incredible, whilst the multitude which stood by eagerly expected the event, with a countenance expressive of joy, executed what he was desired to do. Immediately the hand was restored to its use, and light returned to the blind man. They, who were present, relate both these cures, even at this time, when there is nothing to be gained by lying.”\*

11. REMARKS. (1.) Note first that the power of vision was not destroyed in the blind man, but might be restored if the natural obstacles were removed—and also that the lame man's joints might also be restored by the application of suitable remedies. So the physicians reported.

(2.) Vespasian was careful to have all this certified to him, before he would consent to move in the matter. He would not act till he was assured that no miracle would be required; that there was no disease but what was “*vincible by human aid!*”

\* Horne's Introduction, vol. i. chap. iv. sect. ii. ¶ xi.

(3.) Tacitus did not see the miracle himself; and his statement is not given at Alexandria, but at Rome, and not till nearly thirty years after the event is said to have happened. Nor was Suetonius an eye-witness, who relates the same story in his life of Vespasian; though he says the man was lame in his legs, and not in his hand, as Tacitus states.

(4.) There is strong suspicion that the whole affair was gotten up by the Egyptian priests and the "flatterers" of Vespasian; the one for the honor of their god Serapis who advised the miracle,—the other to give glory and authority to the emperor as the favorite of the gods.

(5.) The witnesses are all interested; Egyptians and Romans—the friends of Serapis or Vespasian, who are equally glorified by the wonder. It was for their advantage to shout for the emperor; and it might have been at their peril to have opposed or ridiculed his pretensions in the affair. Tacitus says some of the witnesses, living when he wrote, persisted even then in their statements, when they had nothing to gain by lying. True, perhaps; but they had nothing to lose either. And it is natural that they who had told the story during the life of Vespasian, should continue to tell it, unless they would convict themselves of falsehood by their own confession. There were no agents of political or ecclesiastical power present to investigate the miracle; no enemies of the miracle-worker to question him, and put the thing to the test—none who dared to oppose themselves to the vengeance of the emperor, if they had dared to doubt the integrity of his miracle.

12. In all these respects we see how widely different is this affair from the miracles of Jesus; how totally different the circumstances, even though it is granted it was done openly, in the presence of a multitude. And Mr. Hume, though he makes so much of this, must have seen

and felt the contrast, if he stopped to make the slightest comparison. As Paley very justly says, "To have brought this supposed miracle within the limits of (favorable) comparison with the miracles of Christ, it ought to have appeared, that a person of a low and private station, in the midst of enemies, with the whole power of the country opposing him, with every one around him prejudiced or interested against his claims and character, pretended to perform these cures, and required the spectators on the strength of what they saw, to give up their firmest hopes and opinions, and follow *him* through a life of trial and danger; that many were so moved as to obey this call, and at the expense both of every notion in which they had been brought up, and of their ease, safety and reputation; and that by these beginnings a change was produced in the world, the effects of which remain to this day : a case, both in its circumstances and consequences, very unlike any thing we find in Tacitus' relations."

13. In regard to the *third* example adduced by Mr. Hume, the cures said to be wrought at the tomb of Abbe Paris—we remark :

(1.) The Abbe was a follower of Jansanius, wealthy and full of zeal. He gave away his goods to the poor; and, living himself in the most miserable manner, in rags and hunger, sleeping on the bare ground, and inflicting painful penance on his body, he finally died and was canonized by his followers. Soon it was reported that miracles were wrought at his tomb; and multitudes flocked to the sacred spot to be healed of their diseases by intercession of the saint. The excitement became so great at last, and the crowds so immense, that the government was obliged to enclose the tomb within a high wall, which put an end to the miracles.

(2.) These alleged miracles have two important requisites—they were done openly in a crowd; and they had

powerful enemies in the Jesuits, who were the antagonists of the Jansenists. But the Jansenists who got them up, were also a very powerful party in the church. No such party favored the miracles of Jesus.

(3.) But, being carefully investigated by these enemies of the Jansenists, the imposture and artifice were exposed in many cases. The archbishop of Paris, in one instance, and the archbishop of Seus in more than twenty instances, discovered and publicly showed the fraud. And out of the thousands who crowded to the tomb, only a very few were healed. Montgeron, a believer, who wrote an account of the matter, succeeded in finding vouchers for only nine.

(4.) Of these nine every one was gradual in the process of healing; and so of all, some being days, some weeks, and even months. None were instantaneous. And what is important, the patients were in constant use of medicine, both before coming and while at the tomb. And also it was shown, that some of the cures were only partial and temporary, returning again afterward.

(5.) The diseases were mostly obstructions, dropsies, palsies, and some tumors; all which might be affected very greatly by violent and sudden excitement, or by convulsions. There were two exceptions perhaps: one a young man with one eye inflamed and the other wholly blind. The inflamed eye was relieved; but the blind eye was not affected at all! and what is worthy of note, the inflamed eye was partially subdued by lotions before he reached the tomb, and it returned after he left it! The other was the case of a young man who had lost his sight by the puncture of an awl. This eye also had been gradually improving before the visit to the tomb, and was being restored slowly, as the aqueous humor was replaced by fresh secretions.

(6.) There doubtless were some cures wrought at the



tomb, but of the character that not seldom results from violent and overpowering excitement, from strong mental and physical sympathy; or from sudden convulsions produced in consequence of these. The tomb of the Abbe furnishes only the place and circumstances of the occasion.

14. That these examples of Mr. Hume, therefore, do not come into comparison with the miracles of Christ, will be admitted certainly by all who are disposed to judge fairly. And there is this remarkable difference between the miracles of the Savior and these just examined—the first answered the ends designed, and the second utterly failed. The pretended miracles of the saint, instead of establishing the cause in behalf of which they were devised, raised a division among its friends, disgusting some with the fraud; and created a prejudice without,—and finally Jansenism completely sunk out of existence, notwithstanding its wonders, and the powerful and zealous party enlisted in its defence. Not so with the Gospel and miracles of Jesus. These have outlived all opposition, and are gathering numbers and strength every day.—Christianity is greater, more honored and loved to-day, than ever before; and wears a crown of glory that is growing brighter and brighter for ever.\*

\* See, in reference to this question, Campbell on Miracles, Pt. II. Sects. iv, v. He borrows mostly from the Criterion of Dr. Douglass. Paley's Evidences, Pt. I. Proposition ii. chap. ii; Horne's Introduction, vol. i. chap. iv. Sect. ii; &c

## **SECTION IV.**

**IGNORANCE OF THE AGE FAVORABLE TO MIRACLE-WORKING.**

**IF JESUS WROUGHT SO MANY MIRACLES HE WOULD  
HAVE CONVERTED THE WHOLE JEWISH NATION.**

### **I. IGNORANCE OF THE AGE.**

1. THIS is a favorite objection with many, who betray their own ignorance in making it; for they manifestly know not whereof they affirm. It is also greatly in use among some who would be regarded as learned opposers of the Christian religion. Men are easily deceived in this age, say they, and how much more easy was it to deceive them eighteen hundred years ago, when they were sunk in the lowest depths of ignorance and darkness. This assertion is often heard from those who prefer not to take the trouble of close and patient inquiry into the matter; and it is considered by them as a sufficient explanation of all the miracles, and of the progress of the Christian religion. Now, we beg leave to say that this is mere assertion. The period at which Christ made his appearance was not an age of such profound ignorance and darkness, as the unbeliever imagines or affirms.

2. So far from this, it is a fact, well known to those who are acquainted with the history of the period in ques-

tion, that it was the era of the declension of the hitherto prevailing darkness, and the spread of general information. "It happened very providentially," says Mr. Addison, "to the honor of the Christian religion, that it did not take its rise in the dark illiterate ages of the world, but at a time when arts and sciences were at their height, and when there were men who made it the business of their lives to search after truth, and sift the several opinions of philosophers and wise men, concerning the duty, the end, and chief happiness of reasonable creatures." And we find in and about this period some of the greatest names of antiquity, and many of the most celebrated compositions of any age or country. We need mention only those of Virgil, Horace, Cicero, Nepos, Sallust, Livy; and after these Plutarch, Tacitus, Pliny the naturalist, and the younger Pliny, and many others of the same class. To say that an age which produced such men as these, men who have been the wonder and admiration of the world, was an age of profound ignorance and darkness, is but a confession of one's own ignorance of the history of the times. The truth is, it was what it has been justly called, "a learned and inquisitive age," and formed one of the brightest stars in the constellation of Roman literature. Such an age, therefore, was, of all others, the least likely to be imposed upon by false miracles or frauds of any kind.

3. The sceptic should remember, that there is a vast difference between the false and erroneous views of God and religion, and what he calls profound ignorance. That the people of this age had the most absurd religious notions, and were morally blinded, is true; but moral darkness is one thing, and intellectual darkness quite another. While we admit the first in relation to this period, we deny the last, the falsity of which has been proved. And we desire our friends, when commenting upon this partic-

ular, to be a little more guarded, and before they attribute the rise and progress of Christianity to the ignorance of the age, to make the distinction we have pointed out; because it is most surely a very important one, and will unquestionably put a very different face upon their assertions.

4. But even suppose we admit the objection, length and breadth, grant that the people were both morally and intellectually darkened, that they were buried in universal ignorance—what then? Does this make them incompetent witnesses of the plainest matters of fact? Take the most ignorant man that can be found, one that never saw a book; if he has the use of his eyes, and ears, and senses, he can certainly tell whether a multitude were fed with five loaves or five thousand, whether he sees a dead body come forth to life, and move, and speak, and eat. It does not require much learning or philosophy to enable one to decide a matter of this sort. Yet these, and such as these, were the miracles of Christ; they were matters of fact, to judge of which it was but necessary to have common sense, and the use of one's physical faculties. The objection, then, founded on the ignorance of the age, is in the first place, false; and, in the second place, if true, would not weigh a feather against the Christian miracles.

## II. IF CHRIST WROUGHT SO MANY AND SUCH GREAT MIRACLES, WHY WAS NOT THE WHOLE JEWISH NATION CONVERTED—HOW COULD THEY RESIST SUCH EVIDENCE?

1. This question is often asked with a confidence which seems to signify that he who asks it is satisfied that it casts a suspicion upon the reality of the Christian miracles. The sceptic affirms, that if Christ actually wrought the miracles ascribed to him by the Evangelists, the unbelief of the Jews can in no way be accounted for, inasmuch

as it would seem to be absolutely impossible to resist the force of such evidence. If one were now to restore to life a man who had been dead four days, we should believe at once in his divine mission, because we could not help it—the mind could not bear up against the weight of evidence like this ; it would be compelled to submit, so to speak, whether it would or not. This appears somewhat plausible, at the first, but a little examination will show us that some things are taken for granted which we do not feel disposed to grant as readily as the objector might wish. The objection assumes as its very base that the Jews did not believe in Christ. But who, we ask, is meant by *the* Jews ? That the whole nation is not converted, is admitted ; but that many, yea, that multitudes were, is certain.

2. It is a well-known fact, that the first preachers of the Gospel, and all the first believers therein, were Jews, who, notwithstanding their strong prejudices, were convinced by the works which Christ wrought, and embraced his religion. Every one who has read the evangelical histories, and especially the four or five first chapters in the Acts of the Apostles, will be satisfied that great numbers of the Jews believed. Frequent mention is made of “multitudes,” a “great multitude both of men and women ;” and there are two instances, in one of which, three thousand, and in the other, five thousand at a time, were converted to the Gospel faith. Let this objection be confined, then, to its proper limits, and much of its supposed force will be lost at the very outset.

3. It will be observed, farther, that this inquiry seems to assume that all the Jewish nation were eye-witnesses of the miracles of Christ, which gives a greater weight to their rejection. This, however, was by no means the case. It is probable that but a very small portion of the

great body of the Jews were spectators of the works which Christ performed; and indeed this is rendered certain from the very nature of the case. Hundreds and thousands may have witnessed every separate miracle, and yet there would be an hundred to one who had not seen any of them. Christ wrought, say, fifty miracles: suppose five thousand different persons to have witnessed each one, there would then be two hundred and fifty thousand eye-witnesses;—but this was but a small part of the inhabitants of Palestine. The rejection of these miracles, therefore, was not altogether the rejection of those who actually saw them, as the argument in question unfairly insinuates; and the great mass of those who did see them, believed.

4. Beside this, there were doubtless very many who believed on Christ without acknowledging this openly, through fear of being excommunicated from among the faithful. To some extent we are certain of this, for one of the historians assures us that this was the case; he informs his readers that many of the “chief rulers believed on him, but confessed him not because of the Pharisees, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.” There were unquestionably many in the same situation with Nichodemus and Gamaliel, who wanted to be Christians, and acknowledge Jesus, but were afraid to do it; many like these rulers, who from dread of the Pharisees chose to believe on Christ secretly. To judge of the really converted, therefore, by the number who followed him openly, would result in a false estimate.

5. So far as regards the unbelieving part of the Jews, their scepticism may be accounted for without half the difficulty which the object in review supposes. In the first place, then, the views which the Jewish people had cherished respecting the Messiah, were of a character as

wide as possible from those with which they looked upon Jesus. They had ever associated with the very name of the Messiah all their highest conceptions of grandeur and glory; his coming was to be that of a mighty conqueror, with the pomp and parade of royalty; before him their enemies and oppressors were to be humbled even to the dust; Jerusalem, the beloved city, was to be restored to her former glory; and by the might of his single arm their nation was to be exalted to the very heavens, while he as their king was to sway the sceptre over a subjugated world! How was it possible, then, that they should receive the despised Nazarene as this glorious Messiah—how was it possible that they could believe on him as their deliverer, when they considered his humble condition and appearance, when they saw him teaching the publican and sinner, and heard him repeatedly declaring that his kingdom was not of this world? True, it was certain that he performed wonderful works; but it was equally certain also, in their opinion, that the Messiah would not come in such humble garb, in such lowly condition as he.

6. And here we have but to remember that a belief in the agency of evil spirits, and in magic, prevailed almost universally in this age, and we shall have not the least cause for wonder that the miracles of Christ did not convince a greater number. He could not be the Messiah; of this they were satisfied, and being satisfied, they readily accounted for his miracles by referring them to Beelzebub, the prince of demons, with whom he was supposed to be in league, or to the assistance of some subordinate evil spirit. Did he cast out devils, or, in other words, heal the sick? It was by the aid of the prince of devils. Did he give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, or speech to the dumb? He did it by the power of demons. Did he raise the dead? It was through the agency of

evil spirits. Here then was a complete solution of all difficulties, a key to which their minds unlocked the mystery of his miraculous powers. And in this view of the state of things at the period in question, the wonder is, that, with their high notions of the rank, and splendor, and power of the Messiah, and with this belief in the supernatural agency of evil spirits, and their power to work miracles—the wonder is, we repeat, that so many believed on Christ as actually did.



## CHAPTER X.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED. THE MYTHICAL SYSTEM, AS  
DEVELOPED BY STRAUSS, EXAMINED.

### INTRODUCTORY.

1. The "Life of Jesus," by Professor Strauss,\* is one of the most remarkable books of the age, for many reasons. It has carried to its legitimate results the rationalistic and destructive criticism which has so long time been growing up in Germany, and which recently has shown itself, in a somewhat diseased condition, in this country. It has produced an extraordinary sensation in the theological world. This is not because the idea or theory of the work is new, for it was started long ago ; but because the theory has been carried out to its final issues without fear or wavering ; because what others have done in part

\* We have devoted a large space to the review of the mythic theory of Strauss, for two reasons ; first, because of the acknowledged ability and popularity of his work—and second, because it embodies in it the spirit of almost all the current objections to, and attacks upon, the New Testament history. This the reader will discover as he proceeds with the perusal. The references are to the English translation from the 4th German edition : London, 1846. 3 vols. 8 vo.

with apologetic hesitation, Strauss has done as a whole, with far greater ability, and with a stoicism as imperturbable as the ability is great. That the "Life of Jesus" is a production of much power and immense learning, no one will dispute; and the argument is carried on with a patient and dissecting analysis, with a lavish variety of illustration, a depth of research, a delicacy of perception in the smallest minutiae of criticism, a never baffled ingenuity, and withal an utter absence of every vestige of feeling, which are truly astonishing. And it will probably be allowed by all parties that rationalism, or scepticism, at least in one of its phases, has here reached its culminating point. Dr. Strauss has exhausted the subject. There remains nothing more in this direction that is probable; nothing that, beyond this, can claim even a decent possibility for itself.

2. The author of the "Leben Jesu" does not absolutely banish the personality of Jesus into the regions of legend; but he allows, as the historical basis of his mythical system, that he lived, was baptized of John, was persecuted of the Pharisees, and crucified. So much, possibly, with some other small matters, is true—the rest legendary, fabulous, or, in plain words, false. He allows a space of thirty years from the death of Christ to the preparation of the first Gospel by the compiler, whoever it was. This time he thinks is sufficient for introducing into the common faith of the early Christian the mythical or legendary stories of the Gospel narratives, respecting the birth, miracles, death, and resurrection of Christ.

3. The term "myth" is employed by him to represent both the process and result of this early tendency to "glorify" Jesus. In saying that the evangelical histories are "mythical," he does not accuse the authors, or the first Christians, of any intentional deception. They designed no fraud or imposition upon their cotemporaries,

or upon future generations. They believed all they recorded, but were mistaken. What they regarded as history was only legend, and was the result of unconsciously attributing to Jesus the character and the wonderful works which they imagined the Old Testament foretold of the Messiah. They believed, Jesus himself believed, that he was the Messiah; and therefore, whatever qualities, powers, or works the Scriptures, or tradition, or popular opinion and fanaticism, ascribed to the Messiah, must of course belong to Jesus. The growth of this legendary history was slow, unnoticed; and the authors, or the church itself which is the creator of the New Testament Christ, was unconscious of the work it was doing. And yet thirty years were sufficient to perfect this stupendous work, so gradual in its process! By degrees all the light and glory that the Jews expected or imagined in the coming Messiah, were gathered around the person of Christ; and this halo was continually brightened and enlarged by fresh additions from the Old Testament, from Rabbinical traditions, and popular desires and mistakes. The Old Testament, however, is the principal magazine from which the materials were drawn.\* For an example of the manner in which they were appropriated, we might refer to the account in Luke iv, where the writer relates the rage of the people at the preaching of Jesus, and their attempt to destroy his life by throwing him from a precipice, and adds, "but he, passing through the midst of them, went his way." Dr. Strauss says that the design of the writer was to state that Jesus wrought a miracle to deliver himself from the hands of the people, but informs us that the "alleged miracle was only a poetical fiction unwittingly imitated" from some things recorded in the Old Testament. "We cannot fail to acknowledge the

\* See especially vol. i. pp. 80—82. Introduction § 14.

influence of the myth," says he, "which, wishing to embellish the history of Jesus, took a pleasure in representing Christ as a personage from whom a heavenly hand drove away his enemies, as in former times it had protected Lot, by smiting his foes with blindness (Gen. xix), and Elisha in the same manner (2 Kings vi); or rather as a personage who by virtue of his superiority, protected himself."

4. Quinet has given a very good outline of the plan of the work, which, in part, condensed, we will present here for the better understanding of the question in discussion. The circumstances of the Savior's birth appears to Strauss to be fabulous imitations of those recorded of the birth of Abraham and Moses. Nimrod and Pharaoh are the models for Herod's massacre of the babes of Bethlehem. Christ was represented as born in Bethlehem, in preference to all other places, in order to conform to the prophet's words. The star which guided the magi to the manger, was copied from the star promised to Jacob in Balaam's prophecy. The presentation of Jesus in the temple, was a story invented to glorify the man in the child. The disputing with the doctors at the early age of twelve years, was borrowed from the history of Moses, Samuel and Solomon, who displayed heavenly wisdom at the same age. The Gospel miracles are either copies from those in the Old Testament; or parables of Jesus manufactured, at a later period, into actual occurrences; or legends grown up on the foundation of what was originally an ordinary action of his. The miracle of the loaves and fishes points to the manna in the desert, and the twenty loaves with which Elisha fed the people. The water changed into wine is a distorted reminiscence of the unwholesome water restored by the prophet. The fig tree struck with barrenness was only a change into fact or history of a parable previously uttered. The transfiguration

is closely allied to that of Moses on Mount Sinai. The conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, reminds him of the meeting of Eliezer and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, Moses and Tipporah. The crucifixion, it is true, is real, historical; but even this seems to be reluctantly yielded; for the cross reminds him strongly of the brazen serpent set up on a pole by Moses. The prophecies of Christ respecting his death and resurrection were imaginary; and arose from the fact that the disciples applied to him all the words of the prophets which could be forced into reference to him; and then, imagining he had risen from the dead (!), they also imagined he must have foretold these momentous events. Thus they deceived themselves! The agony in the garden and on the cross, the bloody sweat, the cup brought by the angel, are all taken from the Lamentations of Jeremiah. The two thieves belong to Isaiah. The divided raiment, nailing the feet and hands, the sword thrust into his side, the gall and vinegar, the thirst, and the dying words of Jesus,—“Eli, lama sabacthani,” are borrowed from the twenty-second and sixty-ninth psalm. The resurrection, as we have said, was imaginary; originating, probably, in a vision of the disciples, similar to that of St. Paul on his way to Damascus. The ascension is a copy of that of Enoch and Elias; the fiery horses of the latter being changed to clouds, the better to suit the gentle nature of Jesus. He does not fail to note that it also reminds him of the apotheosis of Hercules, Romulus, &c! \*

\* *Voices of the Church*, pp. 63—67; 23—36 See also the calm hard feeling with which Strauss carries out his inquiry into all the details of the crucifixion and death of Jesus. vol. iii. pp. 252—396. The same also respecting the Resurrection and Ascension, pp. 311—395. There seem, in the process, more indications of a love of ingenious criticism and theory, than of truth.

5. This is, perhaps, as good a sketch of the general plan and process of Strauss' work as our limits will allow us to give. It is of course imperfect, and does not do justice to a work which follows out this system with unequalled talent and skill, through fifteen hundred pages; and exhausts, it would seem, in their application to the Gospel histories, all the resources of sceptical philosophy, learning and criticism. Still the reader will gather from the outline given, a tolerably clear idea of the aim of the "Leben Jesu," and the method pursued in reaching that end.

6. We do not of course propose a labored and thorough examination of the work, or even its idea or theory. We have not space for it; and if we had, we have not the knowledge nor the ability requisite for the task. We design rather to point out some of the assumptions on which it rests; some of the perversions of the intention and meaning of the narrative; some of the false inferences and groundless conclusions which are set up with much parade—and, finally, to show that the theory of Dr. Strauss involves more and greater difficulties than it removes.

## SECTION I.

THE ASSUMPTION OF STRAUSS. A MIRACLE IMPOSSIBLE. THE  
GOSPELS COMPLETE HISTORIES IN THEIR STRUCTURE  
AND CONTENTS. THE "MUST BE"  
FOLLOWS THE "MAY BE."

1. PROFESSOR STRAUSS starts with the assumption that a miracle is impossible.\* He admits that the Gospel narratives are intended to set forth a miraculous history; that the authors meant to be understood as describing miracles, in the proper acceptation of the word. This is plain enough; the whole warp and woof of the story is miraculous, and the writers believed what they wrote. He utterly discards and explodes the views of the naturalistic school, which resolves the miracles into ordinary events, the results of natural causes. He shows indisputably that the evangelists did not so understand it, and that this explanation does not meet the difficulty. This explanation failing, and a miracle being impossible, another method of interpretation must be applied, which brings out the mythical theory as the only satisfactory one in this dilemma.

\* Introduction § 13. vol. i. 64.

2. It is this assumption which seems to us to disqualify Strauss from being a candid inquirer, and to vitiate his whole argument. No man, beginning with such a settled conviction, is prepared to examine the Gospel histories impartially. His mind is already made up against them—they are not, and cannot be, true! These men affirm that they saw and heard such things, or make the statement on the authority of those who do affirm this—but then they were mistaken. The disciples *thought* they saw the risen Jesus, but they were deceived. Why? Because a miracle is impossible! The record says Christ healed the sick, restored the lame, gave sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, &c. But then this is not true; it is only a legend or myth. Why? Because a miracle is impossible! But hundreds and thousands declare they saw these things done—nay, the subjects of these wonderful works, or some of them doubtless, were alive to witness to the record when it was written. But they were all mistaken—these thought they were healed, and those thought they saw it; but it was not so. Why? Because a miracle is impossible! But many of these persons gave up every thing, endured cruel persecutions, and finally suffered martyrdom in attestation of these things. Well, they were honest, and believed what they said; but they suffered and died only for a vision, or an imagination. Why? Because a miracle is impossible!

3. Now, is a man setting out with this pre-determined judgment against the possibility of a miracle, in a fit condition of mind to read and criticise fairly the testimony of the disciples of Jesus? Would a man be allowed to sit on a jury, or on the judge's bench, who had already pre-judged the case to be tried? who had already resolved to bring in the accused guilty? Yet this is precisely the position of Dr. Strauss in relation to the statements of the Gospel histories. And, strange as it may seem, he never-



theless says very innocently, that he enters upon his inquiry without any unfavorable prepossessions !

4. But Dr. Strauss does not condescend to furnish any proof that a miracle is impossible in the nature of things. He makes no apology, offers no explanation of his unwarrantable and unphilosophical assumption of the point on which his whole argument hinges. And it is truly surprising to see with what perfect coolness, with what calm indifference to any attack from this quarter, he takes this great question for granted ; the very question which should be settled, the very point which should be proved, before the necessity for the mythical explanation can be shown ; before his argument, which rests upon this assumption, can take effect. But, as if wholly unconscious of this ; as if it were already decided, beyond dispute, that a miracle is impossible ; he proceeds in his investigation, on the ground that, the miraculous and the naturalistic views alike failing, the present conditions of the question demand the mythic theory. But he has not proved the first proposition in his demonstration, viz : that a miracle is impossible ; and of course, therefore, he has not proved the second, which, he argues, is the consequent of this, viz : the necessity of the myth.

5. But this assumption of the impossibility of a miracle—what is it but a repetition of Hume's position ? a declaration of infinite knowledge ? Let us look at the words of Strauss. " When, in the first place, a solution of the difficulties which I find in the Biblical history, satisfactory to myself, is put before me ; and when, secondly, a solution of the philosophical views which I have against the possibility of a miracle,—then will I allow myself to be convinced." " A miraculous operation upon natural objects, or products of art,—as turning water into wine, multiplication of loaves,—admits of no possible explanation. Even the conception of such a possibility is so far

out of the question, that I must lose my senses, before I could receive any thing of the kind." "There is no right conception of what history is, apart from a conviction that the chain of endless causation can never be broken, and that a miracle is an impossibility." Now this is only what Mr. Hume said long ago—"a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature, and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws," &c. But all this talk about the unbroken chain of endless causation, and the invariableness of the laws of nature, is, as we have said, and as the preceding chapter shows, sheer assumption, which is incapable of being proved. Of course, then, the first link in the mythic chain is wanting; the proposition on which the alleged necessity for the *Leben Jesu* and its theory rests, is not proved. The process adopted by Strauss, therefore, is false in principle. The miraculous accounts of the Gospels are not, at the outset, to be pronounced mythical or false, because a miracle is impossible; but their integrity and historical truth are to be determined by the credibility of the witnesses, and the facts in the case.

6. Another false assumption of Strauss, and which is the ground-work of much of his argument, is, that the Gospels are regular histories, and to be criticized by the same rules, and with the same exacting severity, with which the works of Gibbon, Hallam or Bancroft are to be judged. Now nothing can be more mistaken than starting out to criticise the Gospel narratives under the influence of such an opinion. The men who wrote the Gospels were not the men to write a philosophical and critically digested history. They were plain, uneducated, simple-hearted men, in humble life; without any pretensions to literature or science, but professing only to tell their story in an honest, straight-forward way. The narratives are not history, according to the scientific method

of writing it in the nineteenth century ; and scarcely biography. They are simply records, statements of what the authors themselves saw and heard ; or of what they had directly from those who did see and hear the works and words of Jesus. And this embraces only a very brief period. Neither of the Gospels pretend to be a life of Christ, from his birth to his death ; or even to give a complete account of his teachings and doings during the short time, about three years, of which they profess to treat.

7. For example : Luke, whose narrative comes nearest to the form of historical composition, is almost entirely silent respecting the first thirty years of Christ's life ; and omits some very important events recorded by the other writers as occurring within the period of which he wrote. His birth and infancy, and the disputation in the temple at twelve years of age, embrace all the information Luke gives of the life of Christ, till about the time he enters upon his public ministry. So Matthew and Mark have omitted many things mentioned by Luke as said and done by Christ during the three years of his ministry. And John has, on the one hand, recorded very many important facts not mentioned by either of the other evangelists ; and, on the other, omitted very many which they have recorded. All this shows that the Gospels are not intended to be systematic, critically precise histories of the life of Christ ; shows that they were not intended even to give a complete history of his public ministry. John distinctly states, at the close of his Gospel, that he left unwritten much more of the doings of Jesus than he had written : " And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." This is doubtless in the strong style of eastern speech, but it illustrates

the absurdity of criticising the Gospels as if they were designed for regular histories, composed in strict obedience to the rules of modern historical composition ; or even for entire and finished biographies of the Savior. Yet this is the ground on which the criticism of Strauss proceeds from first to last. Every omission by one writer of a particular mentioned by another ; every variation in the order of events ; every difference in the minutest details of an occurrence, every variation as to time, place, persons or words—all these are carefully noted by him, and made ground for the assertion that the narratives are not historical, but mythical\*—not distinguishing between historical composition and historical matter, between the scientific structure and the truth of a narrative.

8. But supposing the Gospels had been written according to the strictest rules of historical composition, and made as perfect as the highest art could require. Would this unreasonable and exacting criticism be satisfied?—Would scepticism, would common sense itself be satisfied ? So far from this, the weapons of attack on the genuineness and credibility of the Gospels, would be tenfold keener and stronger than now. Such nicety of art, such skill in composition, such literary excellence ; the sequence of events, the chronology, the unity of plan, and dramatic effect complete—all these things would only have formed so many parts of an irrefutable argument that the Gospels were not the productions of Matthew, Mark, John. Such accurate compositions, so perfect in

\* And this notwithstanding his "justly" on page 146 of vol. i. Practically he utterly disregards the admission, that an omission of an event by one or more writers "is not a negative of the event." See the whole question of the differences in the Gospel Histories, discussed in the next chapter ; and the argument of Strauss and others applied to well known facts in ancient and modern history.

all the details of art, so excellent in their literary merit, could not have come from Galilean fishermen or tax-gatherers. The proof against their genuineness would, in such case, have been irresistible. No one would have believed that such narratives were the productions of rude, unlettered men, who had their life-long been at daily toil for their bread. No one would have believed that compositions so nicely constructed and finished, were the simple unvarnished stories of men who were only anxious to tell what they had seen and heard; and whose hearts all the while were overflowing with emotions of wonder, admiration and affection. We should have gone to the Grove or the Academy, to the Libraries of Rome, or the schools of Alexandria,—any where but to the villages of Galilee and the shores of Genesareth, for their authors.\*

9. The assumption, therefore, on which the criticism of Strauss proceeds, that the Gospels are complete histories, constructed according to the rules of art, or even complete biographies of Christ, and therefore to be judged as such, is entirely false and groundless; and so much of his argument as rests on it is also false and groundless.

10. The narratives of Matthew and John, of Mark and Luke, are, as we have said, the unpretending records of eye-witnesses, or prepared from the statements of those who were. They write, each from his own stand-point, and according to the necessity which induced him to write. Each tells his story in his own way, without asking or thinking probably whether another had told the same story; or, if so, whether he had told it in the same way. Some of the sayings and works of Jesus would make a deep and lasting impression on Matthew, which

\* See Beard's Moral Argument for the Gospels, Voices of the Church, pp. 215—228.

perhaps were not calculated to affect John in the same way, whose temperament and character seem to have been quite different. On the other hand, for the same reason, some of the words and miracles of the Master would move the whole being of Matthew as with an electric shock, while they would produce little effect on John. The natural inference would be, that Matthew would be careful to record the first, and would likely omit the second; while the opposite would be the case with John, who would give particular account of the last, and pass over the first in silence. This, which seems so likely from the nature of the case, is the actual fact; and is a satisfactory explanation of the omission of one writer, and the additions of another—neither professing to tell all that happened, all that Christ said and did, but only a part; the part that was freshest in his memory, the part that fell upon his soul and heart with most power, the part that seemed the most important and direct to the purpose for which he was writing.

11. The principle is illustrated in daily life. Let any three or four persons listen to a sermon or an address, and each will be differently affected by different portions of it; according to his taste, temperament, or state of mind at the time. One will admire and remember one thought or sentiment, because it perfectly answers to his own views and feelings; while another will scarcely notice it, and forget it as soon as spoken. But some other opinion advanced, or truth uttered, to which the rest were almost entirely indifferent, will come to him with great power, and fix itself so firmly in his mind, that ever after he will remember it, and be able to repeat the very words in which it was originally expressed. The same remark holds good in regard to any ordinary or extraordinary occurrence. Some one feature of the event, or some particular incident or accompaniment, will attract his atten-

tion to the exclusion of nearly all the rest. Another, not giving heed to this, will be specially occupied with some other aspect of the affair, some entirely different elements or details, wholly overlooked by the others, or possessing no interest for them. Now in giving an account of this event, each one will tell his own story in his own way ; omitting altogether, or lightly touching, what had little attraction for him ; and giving particular prominence to, and dwelling at length on, what specially interested and commanded his attention. And, as we have said, it is precisely on this principle that the Gospel narratives are constructed ; the authors not pretending to write a regular and complete history of the Life of Jesus, but to tell what they saw and heard with the most interest ; what moved their souls with the deepest feeling, and was therefore most distinctly remembered ; and finally what seemed to them best fitted to promote the particular object for which each prepared his own narrative. This being the case, the false principles of interpretation and criticism with which Strauss sets out to establish his mythic theory, must of course lead to false conclusions and results.

12. There is another assumption of our author, which is apparent all through the work, but stands out in full relief at the close of his investigation ; viz : that, because he has shown, as he thinks, which he has not, that the Gospel narratives *may be* mythical, therefore they *are* ! This quiet assuming that what is possible, really is ; that what *may be*, *must be* ; is a kind of logic in which such a dialectician as Dr. Strauss ought not to indulge. And yet it is a thread that runs through all his reasoning, and makes an important element in all his conclusions ; and it seems difficult to believe that he is as wholly unconscious of this assumption, as he seems to be.

13. Nothing is more unreasonable than to take it for

granted that an explanation of a difficulty is the true one, because it appears to be, or really is, satisfactory. Many very plausible explanations may be given, and yet none of them be the right one. Many theories may be started in exposition of certain phenomena, and may all be very reasonable; and yet not one of them be the true theory, or assign the real cause of the phenomena. Even, therefore, if Strauss has accomplished what he complacently states as the results of his criticism, viz: the complete overthrow and destruction of the miraculous and naturalistic positions; it does not necessarily follow, as he quietly assumes, that the mythical theory is established, that it is *the* explanation. Though we grant that it is *possible*, or even *probable*, it still remains to show that it *is*. Certainty does not follow probability; and the *must be*, as we have said, is not the logical consequent of the *may be*. Some future critic may discover some new plan of explanation, more plausible and probable than the mythic—allowing, what we do not allow by any means, that Strauss has completely demolished the miraculous, or as he terms it, the supernatural view. And it is to be noted, that Strauss does not attempt to prove that myths are the origin of the Gospel narratives, in any other way than by showing, as he thinks, that it *might* be so. No real proof can be offered. There is none. The utmost that can be reached, is the *may be*—and scarcely this; for it is instantly met with unanswerable difficulties at the very outset. And the reader of the *Leben Jesu* should keep this fact constantly in mind,—that the farthest reach of the argument is the *may be*, the *possible*; if it can be properly so called, in the face of these difficulties. And he must not suffer himself to be misled or influenced by the ingenious manner in which the author has assumed the question in debate; and substituted, so quietly, the positively certain for the doubtfully possible.



## SECTION II.

### EXTERNAL DIFFICULTIES OF THE MYTHIC THEORY. THE AGE IN WHICH CHRISTIANITY TOOK ITS RISE. THE PEOPLE. THE TIME ASSIGNED FOR THE GROWTH AND COMPLETION OF THE SYSTEM.

#### I. THE AGE IN WHICH CHRISTIANITY TOOK ITS RISE.

1. NOTHING is more plain to a careful and candid student of history, than the fact that the period at which Christianity took its rise, was not a legendary or mythic, but peculiarly a historical age. It was noted for its philosophy and literature, for inquiry and scepticism, for laborious and over-nice analysis of every subject presented. It was the fashion to sift and dispute, to doubt and deny. As Coquerel justly remarks, "this argument, to one who understands the scientific spirit of the age, is an extremely forcible one ; because at that time philosophy was essentially critical. The great and glorious works of antiquity are, as it were, smothered under an enormous mass of notes and explanations. The poems of Homer especially served as the subject for interminable criticisms, in which verse by verse, word by word, syllable by syllable, all was analysed, dissected, and sifted in a thousand

ways. In a word, dry, minute, inflexible criticism, armed with innumerable inquiries, and quotations without number, was the order of the day." And in religious matters especially, there was a general scepticism, which expressed itself in sneers and scoffs; and one of the Roman satirists says of the doctrine respecting the gods and a future life, that they were believed only by beardless boys. Now this was not the period for introducing a legendary religion, such as Strauss represents Christianity to be; and especially a religion which made the doctrine of immortal life, and the resurrection of Christ, its leading positions.

2. A religion not based on facts, but made up in the clumsiest way of mere fables and idle legends; a myth of myths, the ghost of ghosts, the Christian shadow of a Jewish shade—nothing is more absurd than the idea that such a religion could have passed in such an age without criticism, without inquiry, without a successful exposure of its ridiculous pretensions to historical truth. The story of Paul at Athens, of Peter at Rome, and of all the Galilean teachers, wherever they went, would have been caught up in its oral form, (and when the Gospels were published, in its written form) and analysed, dissected, its origin sought out, its mythical character exposed, its legends reduced by critical chemistry to their elementary forms, its pretensions laughed at, and the whole thing crushed out before the end of the first century, or even the third quarter of the first century.

3. And it will not do to reply to this by saying, that it was not regarded as of sufficient importance among those capable of this philosophical and critical examination, to induce them to enter upon it. This might apply to the first few years, but the persecutions of Nero, and the testimonies of Tacitus, Pliny, &c., show that the period was brief in which this argument would have any force.

When Athens was startled with the burning eloquence of Paul, and Corinth had its Christian church, and Rome its Christian martyrs; when the whole mass of society began to be moved, and quickened into new faith and life, even in the most distant provinces, it was too late to despise. The time had come to meet this "pestilent superstition," as Suetonius calls it, and inquire into its origin and authority. The time had come to look into the history of this "vast multitude" at Rome, of whom Tacitus speaks, distinguished for their "enmity to mankind." They and their religion were of consequence enough to attract the notice of the government, and to draw on them the persecution of the emperor—and this only thirty years after the crucifixion of Christ, the period which Strauss assigns for the completion of the Christian myths and the composition of the first Gospel! It is too late, therefore, to plead the insignificance of Christianity, as a reason for its security against the attacks of the philosophical and sceptical criticism of the age. It was a fair mark for their shafts; and with all the noise it made, and the tremendous influence it was exerting in the metropolis and in the provinces, a mark not unworthy their shafts.

4. No candid man, then, can doubt for a moment, that if Christianity had been mythical in its origin, a mere bundle of legends, as Strauss asserts; if it had not been historical, based on indisputable facts, with abundant witnesses to prove the truth of its statements, it would have been sifted to the bottom, its fabulous character shown, its falsehoods exposed, its lofty pretensions ridiculed; and speedily it would have been argued, philosophized and criticised out of existence, then and there, at the time and on the spot; and not have been left, after eighteen hundred years, to the tender mercies of Dr. Strauss and his school.

## II. THE PLACE OR COUNTRY IN WHICH CHRISTIANITY BEGAN.

5. This argument will be strengthened when we take into consideration the *place* in which Christianity sprung up, and from which it spread abroad among the nations. It is true that the East was, and is, more given to legendary dreaming, and is more credulous and superstitious than the West, or Europe; but it is remarkable that Christianity spread from Judea, its centre, more westward than eastward. Europe was the principal theatre of the early labors of the disciples of Christ. And if we are reminded of the churches of Asia Minor, we have only to remind the objector, that it was Greek in thought, philosophy, manners, and mostly in population. Now, the birth-place of Christianity was, we venture to say, as unfortunate for a mythical religion, for the progress of its misty legends and fables, as the time. Judea was at this period completely girdled, as it were, with a region in which science, literature and philosophy had taken up their chosen seats; and before the new religion could get abroad, it would have to make its way through this wall of brass. Coquerel has presented this fact in strong light. "Strauss owns," says he, "that Christianity sprang immediately from Judea, and advanced triumphantly among heathen nations. But Judea was at this epoch surrounded by pagan science, which met her every where on her frontiers. On one side she had at her gates in Egypt, the celebrated city of Alexandria, with its gymnasia, its schools, and its far-famed library;—Alexandria, at that time filled with Jews, whose connection with Jerusalem was so intimate, that in the latter place was an Alexandrian synagogue (Acts vi. 9.); Alexandria, whose doctors were acquainted with the mission of John, the precursor of Christ (Acts xviii. 25), and where study abounded more than at Athens. Towards the east was Arabia,

where one portion of Greek science had taken refuge from Roman conquest and oppression. On the north were the cities of Asia Minor, almost all of them the abodes of science; Pergamos, whose library, so long the rival of that of Alexandria, had, under Cleopatra, just been removed thither; Tarsus (which gave its name to St. Paul), where even the Roman youth were educated, and whose schools, according to Strabo, surpassed those of Alexandria and Athens; Antioch, to which Cicero in his oration in defence of Archias, rendered in strong terms the most honorable testimony, on account of the great number of learned men who dwelt there,—Antioch, where the name of Christian was first employed. Christianity, in extending beyond Judea, had to cross these different centres of historical, critical and philosophical learning, to pass these barriers, to submit to this scrutiny, influenced far more by prejudice than by justice. Is it possible to believe that legends adopted by popular credulity, and circulated under this single guarantee, could have deluded these schools so far as to fill the Roman world with Christians even so early as the time of Trajan? What had become of the science of Asia Minor, Greece, and Egypt? and how was it that it failed to discover that these fabulous legends were fabulous legends," and nothing more?

6. Surely the candid mind will admit that it would be as difficult for this mass of Jewish myths to have made its way through these walls of science and critical learning, and gotten such large faith for itself among the pagan nations, as it would be for a wreath of mist or vapor, striking against a mountain peak, to break its way through its walls of granite. And the weight of the argument will be increased, when it is remembered with what contempt and scorn the Greeks and Romans regarded the Jews, among whom these legends had their birth. No

people were looked upon with more ill feeling, or more heartily despised than the people of Judea, those pestilential, rebellious, superstitious Galileans. And, as we know, so troublesome did they become to the Roman government, that about forty years after the crucifixion of Christ, their city was utterly destroyed, with more than a million of the people; their existence as a nation extinguished, and their religion proscribed! Now is it reasonable to suppose that Romans would consent, after all this, to receive from these hated and despised Jews, sold into bondage, branded as criminals, thrown to the wild beasts of the amphitheatre, a by-word and reproach in the earth—is it reasonable to suppose they would accept from these outcasts—nay, from a few fishermen and mechanics who were the outcasts of these outcasts, a religion based on the alleged resurrection of a crucified malefactor, which very assertion itself struck in the face of all their philosophy and scepticism—once more, I ask, is it reasonable, is it possible to believe that Rome and Athens, Antioch and Alexandria, would accept and acknowledge such a religion from such a people? Is it possible to believe that Christianity, coming from this region, and from this people, and aided by such men and means, could have accomplished such a tremendous work, and made such rapid progress among the nations, in the face of such obstacles, if it had been, as Dr. Strauss labors to prove it, a collection of empty myths, of mysty Jewish legends, with scarcely density enough to keep together in one body? We cannot help saying, *Credat Judæus, credat Strauss, non ego!*

### III. THE TIME ASSIGNED FOR THE GROWTH AND RECEPTION OF THIS MYTHIC SYSTEM.

7. On this point also the theory in review is beset with an unanswerable difficulty, which its advocate seems to

feel, and likewise to feel that he has little to offer in the way of reply. He is compelled to admit that the first Gospel was composed about thirty years after the crucifixion ; in which brief space, of course these myths must have been perfected, systematized, and applied to, or gathered around the person of Jesus, as we find them in the New Testament. The thing is impossible. It is in direct conflict with human nature and experience, and in opposition to all history. As if this stupendous system of legends could have grown up to completion, and displacing all the other doctrines and precepts, the prejudices and habits in which they had been educated, in the short period of thirty years ! There is nothing like it in all the world. Was it in thirty years, or five hundred years, that Rome passed from the simple worship instituted by Numa, and from the first temples of the republic, to the deification of the emperors, and the Pantheon with its crowd of gods ? And was it in thirty, or a thousand, years, “ that the imagination of the people of the North created the mythology of Odin, Thor, and Frega, with their palaces of ice and mist ? ” And did the complicated and fanciful mythology of Egypt require thirty, or thousands of years, for its growth and perfection ? No, indeed ; falsehood and fable, on so grand a scale, do not succeed so suddenly ; and, above all, religious fable and legend do not rapidly and easily change the faith and life of a people. Yet “ all history attests, that, thirty or forty years after the death of Christ, Christianity existed everywhere, and everywhere amongst the most polished nations. Dr. Strauss contends that, in that brief space of time, popular credulity, as if by common plan, from East to West, from the Euphrates to the Tiber, was able to build upon the soil of the Old Testament, the immense fabric which he calls the Christian mythology. The birth and mission of John Baptist ; the birth and mission of Jesus ;

all his miracles, precepts, and oracles; his passion, his death, his resurrection, his ascension; the wonderful foundation of the church, comprising the calling of St. Paul—all this was imagined, divulged, repeated by a thousand voices, committed to writing, believed,—believed and formed into a regular system of worship, and raised into a positive religion, in the short space of thirty or forty years!"\* And yet it took ages on ages for the fables of China, and India, and Persia to consolidate into system, and take the form of history! Thirty or forty years for this colossal work—Jewish fishermen the agents—without any aid from philosophy, poetry, or science; without any help from political power—nay, with all these combined to crush it! And yet Dr. Strauss says a miracle is impossible!

8. The feeble reply which is made to this overwhelming objection to the mythical theory, only shows the impossibility of meeting it fairly and satisfactorily. Dr. Strauss says, that "it was not during this space of time that the greater portion of the evangelical cycle was produced. The first groundwork of it was laid in the myths of the Old Testament, composed before and after the Babylonian captivity. Between the time of the rise of the first Christian community, and that of the composition of the Gospel narratives, there was nothing more to be done than to transfer to Jesus the Messianic myths, already for the most part entirely formed, and to modify them according to the Christian signification, and after the individual convictions of Jesus and his followers. Only a small proportion of them remained to be composed." *Introduction, Sect. 14.*

· 9. But this reply, if it has any force, applies only to

: \* *Voices of the Church*, pp. 88, 89. See also Strauss, vol. i. pp. 84, 85.



the Jews, and not at all to the thousands and hundreds of thousands of Gentiles, of Greeks and Romans. These knew nothing of the long legendary preparation of the Old Testament; and had they known, the very preparation itself would have been an additional reason for rejecting it. As we have seen, they held the Jews, their superstitions, and all that belonged to them, in utter abhorrence. How then came these "vast multitudes," of whom Tacitus and Pliny speak, who excited the wrath of Nero at Rome—how came they to accept with such ardent faith and affection these vague and impalpable myths? They had no preparation of Messianic influences. They had to take this religion at first sight, so to speak, opposed as it was to all their feelings, faith, and habits of life, up to that time. The argument of time, the insolvable problem of "thirty or forty years," applies to them in all its original force; and Dr. Strauss offers no counter argument to neutralize it. There is nothing to offer. It is one of those stubborn facts that, here and there in the history of Christianity, rise up like rocks in the midst of the ocean. The waves of scepticism and philosophical criticism may roll and roar around it, and beat upon it with all violence; but it stands unmoved and immovable amid the raging of the sea and the storm!

10. Does the reply suit the case of the Jews any better? We think not. Dr. Strauss says that after the formation of the myths, all that remained to be done in the thirty years from the crucifixion to the composition of the Gospels, was to transfer and adapt them to Jesus. But *why* transfer them to Jesus at all, if he was only the ordinary person the *Leben Jesu* makes him? He did nothing, he said nothing extraordinary, according to Strauss. The discourses contained in the Gospels are mostly inventions of the writers; and all the miracles ascribed to him, are

not real, but mythical.\* How came they to ascribe these discourses to him? How came they to *imagine* that he wrought these miracles? How came they to transfer the Messianic myths of the Old Testament to him, more than another? It is precisely here that the theory of Strauss breaks down again. He has a mighty and wonderful effect, without even the shadow of a sufficient cause. He talks about "the tendency to glorify Jesus." But whence came this tendency? What put it into their heads to make a hero, a Messiah, out of this "carpenter's son?" If he "spake as never man spake before;" if he really did the works, and performed the miracles, recorded of him in the Gospel narratives, then you have a good and sufficient answer to these questions. Then there is a reason for this "glorifying tendency," a reason for transferring the Old Testament myths to him—but, singularly enough, it is a reason utterly destructive of the myths themselves, and of the whole theory out of which they spring?

11. The difficulty which meets him here, is clearly seen and felt by our author; and he vainly endeavors to escape it. He argues that much must be allowed to "the overwhelming impression which was made upon those around him by the personal character and discourse of Jesus."† But he denies the genuineness of these discourses mostly, as before remarked; and there is little or nothing left of the personal character ascribed to Jesus by the Gospels, if his criticism is just. And if the Gospels are not histori-

\* Vol. II. 95—188; 235—454.

† Introduction, § 14. So he says that "even during the lifetime of Jesus, the people *may* have reported many wonderful stories of him." *Why?* which is a word we might use very often. He refers to Matt. xiv. 2. But what right has he to refer to Matthew? How does he know that the story is not a myth? It may be very convenient to suppose Matthew writes history just there.

cal, but mere myths, what does he know about the personal character and discourse of Jesus. If the argument of his book is correct, then his reply to the difficulty in review is entirely powerless; and if his reply to the difficulty is correct, then the whole argument of his book falls to the ground. His answer depends on the character and discourse of Jesus, and this depends on the historical integrity of the Gospels; but, if he has been successful in establishing his theory, he has already destroyed the historical integrity of the Gospels. Of course, then, his answer has no foundation, and the difficulty, which is the destruction of his theory, remains in its full force; still looking him in the face, and demanding an entirely new answer! Where is it to come from?

12. It is evident then, that here there is a link out of the chain so laboriously wrought by Dr. Strauss. There is a starting point wanting; a reasonable and substantial cause for an acknowledged and marvellous effect. The professor virtually reasons in a circle, or the predicate of his proposition is wanting. So that the argument of time, the fact that thirty years is utterly insufficient for the growth and adoption of the legendary or mythic system in regard to Jesus, is as applicable to the Jews as to the Gentiles. And the very reply which Strauss makes to the objection, only betrays his weakness on this important point; and imposes on him the double difficulty of explaining how, without any thing miraculous in his character, without any thing in word or act answering to the requisites of the Messiah as set forth in the Old Testament,—how without any cause, they came to attribute all these things to Jesus;\* and then how it was possible for

\* "Dr. Strauss," says Theodore Parker, "takes the idea, which forms the subject, as he thinks, of a Christian myth, out of the air, and tells us how the myth itself grew out of that idea. But he

such men as his disciples to consolidate these misty fables into a positive, living, creative religion; and in thirty or forty years to plant it among the most civilised and the most barbarous nations, and take captive the intellects and the hearts of hundreds of thousands, who, till then, had never known the meaning, or even heard the name, of Messiah. This is the problem which Dr. Strauss has yet to solve, before he can command faith for his mythic system of interpretation; before he can accomplish the destruction of the historical character of the Gospel narratives.

does not always prove from history or the nature of things, that the idea existed before the story or the fact was invented. He finds certain opinions, prophecies, and expectations in the Old Testament, and affirms at once these were both the cause and the occasion of the later stories, in which they re-appear. This method of treatment requires very little ingenuity on the part of the critic; we could resolve half of Luther's life into a series of myths, which are formed after the mode of Paul's history; indeed, this has already been done. Nay, we could dissolve any given historical event in a mythical solution, and precipitate the 'seminal ideas' in their primitive form. We also can change a historical character into a symbol of 'universal humanity.' "

Mr. Parker then proceeds to dissolve the history of the United States, *a la mode Strauss*, into a series of myths; and it is done in such a happy manner, and so admirably illustrates the plan, and real value, of Strauss' Life of Jesus, that we cannot forbear quoting it, notwithstanding its length. The myths are drawn in part from the Old Testament, in part from the Apocalypse, and in part from fancy.

"The British Government oppressing the Puritans, is the great red dragon of the Revelations, as is shown, by the national arms, and by the British legend of Saint George and the Dragon. The splendid career of the new people is borrowed from the persecuted woman's political history, her dress—"clothed with the sun." The stars said to be in the national banner, are only the crowns of twelve stars on the poetic being's head; the perils of the pilgrims in the Mayflower are only the woman's flight on the wings of a

great eagle. The war between the two countries is only the practical application of the flood which the dragon cast out against the woman, &c. The story of the Declaration of Independence is also liable to many objections. The congress was held at a mythical town, whose very name is suspicious,—Philadelphia,—Brotherly Love. ('We cannot fail to discover the influence of the myth' here, as Strauss would say.) The date is suspicious; it was the *fourth* day of the *fourth* month, reckoning from *April*, as it is probable the Heraclidæ, and Scandinavians, possible that the aboriginal Americans, and certin that the Hebrews did.) Now *four* was a sacred number with the Americans: the president was chosen for *four* years; there were *four* departments of affairs; *four* divisions of the political powers, viz: the people, the congress, the executive, and the judiciary, &c. Besides, which is still more incredible, three of the presidents, two of whom it is alleged signed the declaration, died on the *fourth* of July, and the two latter exactly *fifty* years after they had signed it, and about the *same hour* of the day. (This *fifty* years is probably a bungling allusion to the Jewish year of Jubilee.) The *year* is also suspicious; 1776 is but an ingenious combination of the sacred number, *four*, which is repeated three times, and then multiplied by itself to produce the date; thus  $444 \text{ plus } 4 = 1776$ . Q. E. D. Now dividing the first (444) by the second (4), we have *Unity* thrice repeated (111). This is a manifest symbol of the national *oneness*, (likewise represented in the motto, *e pluribus unum*); and of the national *religion*, of which the Triniform Monad, or "Trinity in Unity," and "Unity in Trinity," is the well known sign !! Still farther, the Declaration is metaphysical, and presupposes an acquaintance with the transcendental philosophy, on the part of the American people. Now the "Kritik' of Pure Reason" was not published till after the Declaration was made. Still farther, the Americans were never, to use the nebulous expression of certain philosophers, an idealo-transcendental-and-subjective, but an objective-and-concentrative-practical people, to the last degree; and therefore a metaphysical document is highly suspicious if found among them. Besides. Hualteperah, the great historian of Mexico, a neighboring state. never mentions this document. And farther still, if this Declaration had been made, and accepted by the whole nation, as it is pretended, then we cannot account for the fact, that the fundamental maxim of that paper, namely, the soul's equality to itself,—*"all men are born free and equal"*—was perpetually lost sight of, and a large portion of the people kept in slavery; still later, petti-

tions,—supported by this fundamental article,—for the abolition of slavery, were rejected by Congress with unexampled contempt, when, if the history is not mythical, slavery never had a legal existence after 1776, &c., &c. But we could go on this way forever.”—*Critical and Miscellaneous Writings*, pp. 299—301.

### **SECTION III.**

**INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES OF THE MYTHIC SYSTEM. THE  
STRUCTURE OF THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES WHOLLY  
UNLIKE A MYTHICAL OR LEGENDARY COM-  
POSITION. SHOWN BY A COMPARISON  
OF THEM WITH ACTUALLY  
EXISTING MYTHS.**

1. THE internal objections to the mythical character of the Gospel narratives, are as palpable and strong as the external. The difficulties in the way of this theory, which lie in the very structure of the narratives, in the character of the events related, and in the simplicity and naturalness with which they are set forth, are obvious to the most superficial reader. And it must require an effort, and all the ingenuity of a sceptical criticism, to give any appearance of probability to the argument in support of their legendary character. It is the object of this section to point out a few of the particulars illustrating the difference between actual myths and the Gospel accounts of Christ; and showing the necessity of acknowledging the historical character of the latter, or of admitting an effect without a cause.

I. REAL MYTHS AND THE GOSPEL HISTORIES CONTRASTED,  
AND THE DIFFERENCE SHOWN.

2. Without any argument grounded in the nature of the subject, and without a lengthy preface, we have thought it best to place actual existing legends or myths respecting Jesus, side by side with the simple, unadorned narratives of the evangelists; and then leave the reader to judge for himself of the contrast, and determine how much force there is in Strauss' arguments for the mythical character of the Gospels.

(I.) THE ESCAPE OF JESUS FROM THE MASSACRE BY HEROD.

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"The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod." *Gospel by Matthew* ii. 13, 14.

*Note.* The naturalness and simplicity of Matthew's account, compared with the account in the parallel columns, shows the difference between history and legend.

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"Elizabeth also, hearing that her son John was about to be searched for, took him and went up into the mountains, and looked around for a place to hide him; and there was no secret place to be found. Then she groaned within herself, and said, O mountain of the Lord, receive the mother with the child. For Elizabeth could not climb up. And instantly the mountain was divided, and received them. And there appeared an angel of the Lord to preserve them." *Apocryphal Prot-evangelion*, xvi.

(II.) JESUS DISPUTING WITH THE DOCTORS IN THE TEMPLE.

"Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he

"When a certain astronomer, who was present, asked the Lord Jesus whether he had studied as-



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was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem, and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying that he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them;—but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. *Gospel by Luke*, ii. 41—51.

## MYTHIC OR LEGENDARY.

tronomy, he replied by telling the number of the spheres and heavenly bodies, as also their triangular, square and sextile aspect; their progressive and retrograde motion; their size, and several prognostications; and other things, which the reason of man had never discovered. There was also among them a philosopher well skilled in physic and natural philosophy, who asked the Lord Jesus whether he had studied physic. He replied and explained to him physics and metaphysics; also those things which were above and below the power of nature; likewise the powers of the body, its humors and their effects; also the number of its members, and bones, veins, arteries, and nerves; the several constitutions of the body, hot and dry, cold and moist, and the tendencies of them; how the soul operated upon the body; what its various sensations and faculties were; the faculty of speaking, anger, desire; and lastly the manner of its composition and dissolution; and other things which the understanding of no creature had ever reached. Then that philosopher arose, and worshiped the Lord Jesus, and said, O Lord Jesus, from henceforth I will be thy disciple and servant." *Apocryphal Gospel of the Infancy*, xx—xxi.

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## MYTHS OR LEGENDS.

(III.) THE MIRACLE OF RAISING THE DEAD. THE RAISING OF  
THE WIDOW OF NAIN'S SON COMPARED WITH A MOHAMMEDAN  
MYTH RESPECTING CHRIST'S RAISING THE DEAD.

"Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold! there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise! And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. *Gospel by Luke, vii. 11—16.*

*Note.* How obvious the contrast between the beautiful and touching narrative of Luke, and the myth opposite. How plain the marks of history and fact in the one, and fiction and invention in the other. The Gospel account is clearly made up from the statements of those who saw and heard; and hence its perfect simplicity. On the other hand the absurdities of the legend are manifest at a glance: The dread of the resurrection, half of the head grey, Jesus living five hundred years, his taking away the life of Shem again, &c.

"Jesus cured fifty thousand sick people in a day. He also raised restored to life four dead persons. . . . The fourth instance was Noah's son Shem. Jesus re-awakened him to life by his prayer. When Shem came out of his grave, it became visible that one side of his head was grey. Shem inquired, "Has the day of the resurrection come already?" Jesus answered, "No; but I have supplicated for thee, and therefore thou art restored." Shem afterwards lived five hundred years in this world; and all this time only half of his head was grey. At last the other side of his head began to grow grey also, and wherefore? Because he dreaded the resurrection too much. Jesus, seeing this, immediately said to him, "Shem, die;" and he fell instantly again into the arms of death." *Haiat ul Kulub. Voices of the Church, p. 347.*

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## MYTHS OR LEGENDS.

(IV.) THE FORTITUDE OF CHRIST. THE STORM ON GENESARETH COMPARED WITH A MOHAMMEDAN MYTH TAKEN FROM THE WORK LAST QUOTED—HAJAT UL KULUB.

"And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. . . . And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" *Mark's Gospel*, iv.

"Then came Jesus to a place called Gethsemane. . . . Then saith he, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell down on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." *Ibid.*, *chapt.* xxvi. 36—46.

*Note.* The contrast between the extravagance of the myth, with its terrified Jesus, its promises of beautiful nymphs of paradise, and a marriage festival of four thousand years, on the one hand; and the serene majesty, in the hour of peril, of the Je-

"One day a frightful storm overtook Jesus, while travelling. It thundered, lightened, hailed, and rained, so violently, that he was greatly terrified, and sought a place of refuge. He saw in the distance a cave in the side of a hill, but when he came near he saw a lion sleeping within it. Jesus now raised his hands towards heaven, and exclaimed, "O God! for all creatures thou hast provided a place of concealment and of rest, and for me only is no place to be found." Scarcely had he thus spoken, when God caused a voice from heaven to say, "O Jesus! thy place of refuge is in me; and I swear to thee by my majesty, that I will give to thee on the day of the resurrection, a hundred hours (beautiful nymphs of paradise). From the day of thy marriage, for four thousand years long, will I feast all nations, and command a herald to proclaim, 'Who are those who left the world, and became dead to it? Be ye now ready for the marriage of him whom the world honors,—for the marriage of Jesus, the son of Mary.'"

## GOSPEL HISTORIES.

## MYTHS OR LEGENDS.

sus of the Gospels ; and the beautiful words—"nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." This contrast is too palpable to require any comment.

(V.) THE MIRACLE OF FEEDING THE MULTITUDE, AS RELATED BY THE GOSPELS, AND BY LEGENDS, COMPARED AND ILLUSTRATED.

"And when it was evening, the disciples came to him saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to me. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves and two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children."—*Mat. xiv.*

"The disciples desired a table, covered with viands, to descend from heaven. Thereupon there descended two clouds, with a golden table, on which there stood a covered dish of silver.... Christ then washed his hands, removed the cover, and said, "In the name of Allah!" and behold there became visible a large baked fish, with neither scales nor bones, which diffused a fragrance around like the fruits of Paradise. Round the fish lay five small loaves, and on it salt and pepper, and other spices. Then Christ said, 'If the appearance of this fish be not sufficiently miraculous to you, you shall behold a still greater sign;' then turning to the fish, he said, 'Live! by the will of the Lord!' The fish then began to stir and move, so that the apostles fled with fear. But Christ called them back again, and said, 'Why do you flee from that which you have desired?' He then called

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*Note.* Observe in this account how the myth multiplies the wonderful in reference to Jesus, piling miracle on miracle. Wholly unlike this is the simple and unadorned statement of Matthew. The miracle is recorded without the least show, without one superfluous word. And the turning the scoffing Jews into swine, related in the context, and the uncalled for offer of greater miracles, so unlike Christ, find no place in the plain matter-of-fact narrative of the evangelist. These are the rightful property of the legend.

## MYTHS OR LEGENDS.

to the fish, 'Be again what thou wast before!' and immediately it lay there as it had come down from heaven. . . . Then Christ called many aged men, many deaf, sick, lame and blind, and invited them to eat of the fish. And they were not only satisfied, but healed of all their diseases. The aged became young, the blind saw, the dumb spake, &c. When the apostles saw this they regretted they had not eaten. At the prayer of Christ, therefore, a similar table descended again from heaven; and the whole people, rich and poor, young and old, sick and whole, came to be refreshed by these heavenly viands. This lasted during forty days." *Biblical Legends, &c.* pp. 259—265. *Harper & Brothers*, 1846.

(VI.) THE LAST HOURS OF CHRIST, AS SET FORTH BY THE GOSPELS, AND BY MOHAMMEDAN MYTHS.

"And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads and saying, 'If thou be the son of God, come down from the cross.' Likewise also the chief priests mocking, with the Scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save! He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him. And it was about the sixth hour,

"On the evening before the Passover feast, the Jews took Christ captive, together with his apostles, intending to put Christ to death the following morning. But in the night Allah revealed to him, 'Thou shalt receive death from me, but immediately afterward be raised up to heaven, and be delivered from the power of the unbelievers.' Christ gave

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and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit! and having said thus he gave up the ghost." *Gospel Histories.*

up his spirit and remained dead for the space of three hours. In the fourth hour the angel Gabriel appeared, and raised him unperceived by any through a window into heaven. The legend then proceeds to relate how an unbelieving Jew was changed into the bodily likeness of Jesus, and being mistaken for him, was crucified in his place. *Biblical Legends*, pp. 263, 264.

3. The preceding examples will serve to show the difference between the structure of the Gospel narratives and the actual myth or legend. The legends selected are by no means the most marked as to their character for absurdity and extravagance; but are chosen because they are capable of a more direct parallel with incidents in the narratives of the evangelists. Many examples of a much more unnatural character might have been given;\* but these are sufficient to illustrate the palpable contrast between what is historical and what is not. And we ven-

\* For example, the assembly of the devils in hell on the night in which Jesus was born, informing their chief of the event; and his journey on earth in search of the child.—The silly story of Jesus explaining to his teacher the hidden meaning of the letters in the word—*Abtsched*—the mischievous and revengeful miracle of his childhood—the long story of his father, Joseph, making a throne for the king, and it being too small, Jesus pulling it out to the proper dimensions—his going with his father when he went out to work, and if a gate, or box, or milk-pail was too large, or too small, his stretching his hand toward it, and bringing it to the exact size desired, &c. &c. *Apocryphal Gospels, &c.*

ture to say that any person, learned or unlearned, having no motive to sway his judgment, if called upon to decide which of the accounts in the preceding parallel columns was, in his opinion, history,—understanding that only one was so,—any person, on the first reading, would say, without a moment's hesitation, *The first*. The simple, unadorned, unpretending manner in which Matthew and Luke relate the events of Christ's life, commands our confidence; and, without an effort, unconsciously, we yield our faith to the truth of the alleged facts, and to the perfect honesty and sincerity of the men.

4. This is not the case with the myth. Take the example numbered (v.). What Dr. Strauss calls the "glorifying tendency," is obvious enough here: The *golden* table, the *silver* dish, the fish *already baked*; and these descending from *heaven*! The unnatural is plain in the effort to embellish; as though the gold and silver enhanced the value and greatness of the miracle. And then the extravagant and wholly unnecessary addition of the miraculous restoration of a baked fish (!), and the still farther prodigy of returning the live fish to a baked one! All this, which has no visible purpose, betrays the legend, the love of the marvellous. And then the whole miracle repeated again for the disciples; and the whole people, *rich* and poor, partaking of the miraculous food—and this not being enough, all their diseases and bodily afflictions healed, as well as their hunger satisfied, by the wonderful fish—and still farther, this continued for forty days!

5. The marked contrast between these elements of the myth and the plain straight-forward account of the evangelists, is at once obvious to the most superficial reader. In their narrative we have an occasion for the miracle, something more than a whim of the disciples: The multitude had followed Christ into a desert place, where it was impossible to obtain sufficient food for so great a

number without long delay ; and they were already weary and faint with hunger. Here was a reason for the miracle. And then how unostentatious the manner of Jesus : no vain challenging the wonder of the crowd, as in the myth, by adding miracle to miracle, without occasion or reason—but quietly he took the loaves and fishes, and looking to God, whose was the power, he blessed, brake, and gave to his disciples, and they to the multitude ! How beautiful the simplicity of this, compared with the boastful display of the myth. And then we have no food coming down from the clouds, as in the myth ; but Jesus takes what is there before him. We have no golden table and silver dish, but the people sit down upon the grass in companies, that they may be approached more easily ; and they take the food in their hands. And when they have eaten, their hunger is satisfied ; but no diseases are healed ; there is no continuance for forty days ; no more wonders follow. The miracle had but one object, and, that accomplished, it ended.

6. It is this structure of the Gospel narratives, this simplicity of statement, this peculiarity of natural details, the absence of all unnecessary appendages, that demonstrates their historical character, and show the groundlessness of Strauss' assumption that they are mythical. And we rely on this feature of the narratives, this internal evidence of their veracity, with a good deal of confidence ; for it is one within the reach of every person, and one that every body, of ordinary capacities, can understand and appreciate. It is a feature indicative of fact and truth, and not an element of mythical or a legendary composition ; as will readily be seen from the comparison already made. Popular credulity or imagination does not make for itself so straight and plain a path. When dealing with a miraculous fact, it does not surround it, and connect it, with such common, homely, every day facts ;



but every thing is in keeping with the main fact—all the accompaniments, the drapery, the whole warp and woof of the web, are also miraculous. Not a word of this, however, is seen in the Gospels; but only a perfect simplicity of fact and description, and a naturalness of accompanying details, which stamps them with the unmistakeable marks of history.

## SECTION IV.

**INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES OF THE MYTHIC SYSTEM. UNDESIGNED  
COINCIDENCES BETWEEN THE EVANGELISTS. THE EVENTS  
AND THE ALLUSIONS TO GOVERNMENT; CUSTOMS, &C.,  
IN THEIR NARRATIVES, ILLUSTRATED AND CON-  
FIRMED BY JEWISH AND ROMAN HISTORIANS.**

1. It will be the object of this section to bring together certain allusions, correspondences, and incidental expressions in the Gospels, which seem to furnish strong presumptive proof that their authors were writing history, describing actual occurrences; and which, therefore, present so many difficulties in the way of the mythical theory. Something has already been done in this department; in chapter vii, especially under sections ii and iv; but the examples to be introduced are of a different kind, and in direct reference to the system in review, and to the objections which such facts furnish against it.

2. Take as an example, Matthew xiv. 1, where it is written, that "Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said *unto his servants*, This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead." How naturally this betrays the guilt and the troubled conscience of Herod, who so foolishly committed himself to the murder of

John. He had not forgotten the deed of blood ; it was a thorn in his memory ; and in this simple statement of Mathew we see what we might have expected. It looks like history, but not like myth. The special point, however, to which we would direct the reader's attention, is found in the words, "said unto *his servants*." It seems singular that Herod should talk with his *servants* on a subject of so much importance. Why should he select them as his confidants, and converse with his inferiors and dependants, instead of his equals ? Neither Mark nor Luke furnish an answer to this inquiry, in the account they give in the parallel passages. But, turning to the 8th chapter of Luke, we fall upon a passage which seems to explain the matter. Speaking of Jesus, preaching in the cities and villages, it is written, "and the twelve were with him, and certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities : Mary, called Magdalene. . . and Joanna, *the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward*," &c. And again, in Acts xiii, we find among other converts named, Manaen, *which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch*."

3. Now these passages, though by mere accident, treating of matters having no connection with the subject of the first passage, clearly explain the reason why Herod should inquire of his *servants* respecting Jesus. Some of them, as we see, were followers of Jesus ; and it is very likely therefore he would talk with them on a subject of which they had personal knowledge, and he had not. Such an incident as this, and such an accidental explanation, is most indubitable evidence of history, and of accuracy of statement.

4. Matt. xxvi. 66. "And others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, *Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee ?*" Now what sense is there in this conduct ? What point or meaning to the

smearing inquiry, "who smote thee?" when the offender was there directly before his eyes? As the passage stands, without explanation, there is no significancy or wit in this scoffing. There is evidently something omitted by Matthew, which is needed to show the point of this cruel jesting. But if we turn to Luke xxii. 64, we shall find the omission supplied, and the seeming absurdity of the scoffing inquiry explained. There it is recorded, that "the men who held Jesus *blindfolded* him." This, then, makes the whole plain. They who smote him in their cruel sport, called upon him to show his prophet-character, by telling while blindfolded, who it was that smote him. They sought in this way to test his power of miraculous sight. How perfectly natural for an eye-witness to omit mention of the circumstance in question. How often, in telling a story, we forget or fail to mention, little items or connecting circumstances, which, though unimportant to us who saw and know all about it, are yet quite necessary to enable others to understand it. The example in review is of this sort. Matthew mentions the main fact that Christ was smitten and insulted with jeering questions; but forgets, or omits, to mention the prior circumstance, on which the point of the questions depend. He knew that Christ was blindfolded, but he forgets that we can only know it by his telling us. And if Luke's Gospel had been lost, we should never have had an explanation of the meaning of the inquiry of those who smote the Savior. How many other difficulties arise from similar omissions, not so fortunately supplied as this?

5. So when Matthew mentions his call to the discipleship, he adds, "And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat *in the house*, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him." ix. 9. "In *the house*"—but whose house? Matthew evidently had a particular house

in view; he knows *the* house, for he was there; but he seems to forget that his readers were not. He does not see how indefinite his language is to us; though he understands perfectly well what house is meant. But Mark and Luke, who were not present, are more explicit. Mark, after mentioning Matthew's call, says, "and it came to pass, that as Jesus sat at meat in *his* house" (ii. 15); and Luke says that Matthew (Levi) "made him a great feast in *his own* house." v. 29. How natural the expression of Matthew, when we discover that he is speaking of what occurred in his own house. He seems to be thinking it over with himself, instead of writing for others. But the other evangelists, having no personal connection with the affair, do not so easily lose the historian in the thinker.

6. So, also, note the other natural circumstance—that many publicans, or tax-gatherers, were present at the feast. Matthew was a publican himself, and it is natural he should invite those who were associated with him in his business, that they might see and hear the new Master to whom he was to devote the rest of his life. It must be confessed, I think; that such correspondences as these look wonderfully like a relation of actual events. The odds are vastly against the probability of a legend or myth preserving consistency in such trifles as these.\*

7. Let us take one or two examples of another class. "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, *Annas and Caiaphas being*

\* See an excellent little volume entitled, "The Veracity of the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, argued from their undesigned coincidences," &c. By Rev. J. J. Blunt. Boston, 1829. 1st American Edition, pp. 127. These examples and many more may be found.

*the high-priests," &c.* Luke iii. 1. But how comes Luke to speak of there being two high-priests at once, when there could be only one lawfully? Is not this an oversight, and proof that he is not writing history? or, if he is, that he is not to be trusted, since he mistakes on so important a point of the law? Well, if so, the same judgment must be entered against Josephus. His history is also mythical; for he speaks of two high-priests at the same time: "Quadratus sent two others of the most powerful men of the Jews, as also *the high-priests Jonathan and Ananias.*" Jewish War, B. ix. chap. xii. § 6. If Josephus had never written, what an outcry would have been raised against Luke's history!

8. There is another striking example of the accuracy of Luke, though it occurs in the second part of his history, Acts xxiii. 4, 5. "And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high-priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high-priest." Now it is a singular fact that, properly, Ananias, who is intended here, was *not* the high-priest at this time. He had been deposed; his successor had been murdered; and, no other having as yet been appointed, Ananias had, of his own authority, usurped the place, and taken upon himself the duties of the office. It was precisely at this interval that Paul was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrim. How perfectly in keeping with the facts are the words and conduct of Paul. He might have known of the banishment of Ananias from the high-priesthood, and perhaps have heard of the murder of his successor, Jonathan; but having just returned from abroad, (See Acts xxi, xxii) he did not know the circumstances of the assumption of the office by Ananias. Such coincidence of historical facts, so natural in themselves, when one is writing from personal knowledge of legal affairs, is perfectly inconsistent with the idea of legend, or invention many years subse-

quent to the alleged events. Invention, fable, myth, do not deal in such undesigned correspondences, which do not appear on the surface for effect, but the point and accuracy of which, to be seen, must be sought after.

9. So in Acts xii. 1, Luke calls Herod "*king*." But on examination we find that there had been no king at Jerusalem for thirty years before, and history shows there was none ever after! Luke then has made a mistake, has he not? It seems very like it, to be sure. But let us look again, diligently, if there be not some explanation of this. If Luke was on the spot he ought to have known; and if for thirty years there had been no king, and never after, it is singular he should make such a mistake. But let us look. Ah, here is something that seems to bear upon it in Josephus, Antiquities, B. xviii. chapt. 7 § 10. He says, Caligula, the emperor, sending for Herod to come to his palace "*put a crown upon his head*, and appointed him *king*." But stop,—on reading farther, we find this is only in reference to the terarchy of Philip, and does not include Judea. The difficulty is not quite removed then; though it appears Herod was properly styled "*king*," and Luke is not wrong in the use of the word. Let us try again. Reading on into the nineteenth book of the Antiquities (chapt. v. 1.), we find that "*when Claudius mounted the throne of the Roman empire, he confirmed, by public decree, to Herod (Agrippa) the kingdom given him by Caligula, adding also Judea and Sammarai*." So then, at last, we have a king at Jerusalem, and Luke is *perfectly* correct! It takes some time to get at this, but it is doubly valuable for this very reason; for it shows that Luke wrote history, and that he did not expect to be questioned or doubted, and so took no pains to guard against suspicions, or to fortify himself against attack. And what shows the remarkable accuracy, and personal knowledge of Luke, is the fact, that the period.

during which Herod was king at Jerusalem, was only *three years* ! How easy to have made a mistake in chronology here ; especially if written many years after the event, and by some one not an actor in the scenes recorded. But suppose Josephus had given us no history ? Dr. Strauss would have urged the passage as argument that the account was unhistorical ; that the pretended Luke was mistaken. We could not have replied ; but, after all, Dr. Strauss and not Luke, would have been mistaken.

10. Once more : Luke calls Gallio “deputy (*pro-consul*) of Achaia.” Acts xviii. 12. Now it is well known that those provinces belonging to the senate were governed by proconsuls, and those belonging to the emperor, by procurators. But Tacitus tells us (*Annals* i. 76), that Achaia, though originally a senatorial province, was seized by Tiberius, and converted into an imperial province. How then is it that Luke calls Gallio the governor, *proconsul* ? Has he made a mistake ? Well, suppose he has—is it very strange that his memory should sometimes fail him ? or that he should even be ignorant of all the nice distinctions of name and political complexion belonging to the administration of Roman affairs ? Look at the gross blunders of European writers respecting this country ; and even of prominent English writers—and we have more than a parallel. But *has* Luke made a mistake ? It is true that, according to Tacitus, it looks as if he had. But, by accident as it were, we fall in with a passage in Suetonius’ *Life of Claudius* (c. 25), which puts the matter right. This passage tells us that Claudius, who became emperor four years after the death of Tiberius, *restored* the province to the senate again ; and of course, therefore, the title of the governor is *proconsul* (deputy), and Luke is again correct ! And how wonderfully exact, too ! for it would have been the easiest thing in the world to have been wrong, amid so many political



changes. Here also note that, if the work of Suetonius had perished, then Tacitus would have been cited as indisputable authority to prove the unhistorical character of Luke's account; to show that it was not written by one on the spot, or at the time pretended. But all this while, Luke would have been right, and the opposer wrong, though we could not have proved it! \*

11. Let us come now to a few examples of another sort. The frank and honest manner in which the Gospel narratives record incidents and facts which, at first sight, seem to bear against the cause they represent, indicates the presence of history, the relations of simple-hearted, unsuspecting actors in the events described. Observe, for instance, the undisguised manner in which the errors and faults of the disciples are set down; their disputes with each other, their doubts respecting Jesus, and their total misapprehension of his real character, though so long with him, and finally their cowardly desertion of him at the time of the crucifixion. All this looks not like fable or myth, but like plain fact, honestly stated, though not very creditable to those concerned.

12. So notice, likewise, how openly, and without explanation, the words of Jesus to one asking to go and bury his father before following him, are related—"Let the dead bury their dead." However harsh this may seem, they make no effort to soften it. Not a word of excuse or reason is added; and you are left to explain it as you may. There is no myth here; and Dr. Strauss looks in vain for his "tendency to glorify Jesus." This is his-

\* Many examples, illustrative of the point discussed in the text, may be seen in Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History*, Pt. I. B. i, ii. Paley has condensed the statements of Lardner in his *Evidences*, Pt. II. chapt. vi. See also Tholuck on the *Credibility of the New Testament History*, in the *Voices of the Church*.

tory ; and however it may seem, Jesus said it, and so they record it ; and there leave it. See also what is related of his reply on a certain occasion, when told that his mother and brethren stood without desiring to speak with him. Matt. xii. 46—50.

13. A singularly beautiful instance of naturalness occurs in the account of the raising of Lazarus ; John xi. When Jesus had cried aloud, "Lazarus come forth, he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and with a cloth about his face. *And Jesus said, Loose him, and let him go !*" And when we consider the circumstances of the occasion, nothing looks more natural and probable than this direction of Jesus. The dead man had come forth at the spoken word, with his grave garments bound about him ! With what overwhelming wonder must the people who stood by have been filled. Some would start back, and shrink away in terror from the apparition ; others would be paralyzed and stupified ; and all would hesitate with bewilderment. All this while Lazarus stands there, "bound hand and foot with grave clothes ;" and in the confusion and fear no one discovers his situation, or thinks of any thing but the stupendous miracle. But Jesus, who is the only calm one in all the crowd, seeing his condition, says quietly, "*Loose him, and let him go.*"\* Such an incident as this, so little likely to be invented, so like what we should expect when we come to look at it, so manifestly the statement of an

\* Mr. Furness has made good use of this incident in his "Jesus and his Biographers," p. 230. 2d Edition. Indeed he has illustrated the whole argument of incidental proofs in a most admirable manner. Without adopting his views of the personal power of Jesus, and of the philosophy of miracles, I am constrained to say, that I think his volume one of the best ever written on the Gospels.

eye-witness, impresses us more than labored arguments, with the conviction that the Gospels are histories of actual occurrences.\*

14. There is another of these trifling coincidences that has struck us as a remarkable instance of this kind of proof, unconsciously furnished by the evangelists, of the historical character and integrity of their narratives. The character of Thomas as a doubter is a prominent one in the Gospels. He was always ready to demand a proof before he believed. No matter how many others had seen and heard, he must see and hear for himself. Now there is a simple incident which, in a striking manner, illustrates this feature in his character, and without any intention, coming into the narrative for another purpose. I refer to the record in John xx. 19—29. On the evening of the day Christ rose from the dead, the disciples were assembled with closed doors, for fear of the Jews; but, adds the evangelist, "*Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them.*" This is precisely what we should expect; it is in keeping with Thomas' character. He was a doubter, and one of your worldly sort of people, who did not at all understand Christ; who saw, or expected to see, in him an outward

\* A similar instance of naturalness occurs in Mark xiv. 51, where he narrates the arrest of Jesus. "And there followed him a certain young man having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him; and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked." Now this is not connected with any thing before or after it. It is mentioned apparently without any aim or end, and only because, at the moment of writing, it was recollected. No one on earth, who was writing a fiction, would think of inventing such a circumstance. The record of it shows the simplicity of the evangelists, and the utter absence of any plan, or thought, but that of telling the facts as they occurred.

Savior, a Jewish Messiah. Contrary to his expectations, Christ had been arrested and put to death. His crucifixion finished the matter with him. He had mistaken Jesus, and since he was dead, he had abandoned the whole thing, and probably betaken himself to his business again. But the other disciples, still clinging to the memories of the past, and remembering with sorrow the Master they had loved with tenderness, met together to talk over his death, and to counsel and encourage each other; and, perhaps to advise together touching the future. But mark—"Thomas was not with them." No, not he. Why should he be? The Master was dead; he was not the Messiah; the drama was closed; and he was done with the whole affair. There was no use in spending more time about it; and so, just as we should have predicted, knowing the man, he was not at the meeting, but elsewhere, probably at his business.

15. And when the other disciples tell him they have met Jesus face to face, he will not believe, even then, that it is the same Jesus who was crucified. He must first put his hand on the prints of the nails, and in his side, before he will believe that Jesus is risen. Then, when eight days after he does this—and not till then—his doubts are overcome, and he exclaims in faith, "My Lord! and my God!" This obstinate unbelief on the part of Thomas explains his absence when the sorrowing and rejoicing disciples met on the evening of the day they had been told of the resurrection. And so simple and natural an incident as this, introduced in such a quiet way, looks too much like a history of real events to be doubted, it seems to me, by any but a legitimate descendant of Thomas.

16. These correspondences, allusions, and unintentional evidences of the historical character of the narratives of the evangelists, and of the actual occurrence of the events therein set forth, seem to us to present very

great difficulties in the way of the mythic theory. It is not easy to convince an unprejudiced mind that legends preserve such harmonies of time, place, and character; that they are so correct in trifles, in the smallest details, and at the same time so free from all extravagancies and unnaturalness. These are the exclusive property of history, and actual life; and the narrative possessing them, especially when written by plain, uneducated men, furnishes the most unexceptional proof which can be given, that it is in all essentials correct and true.

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And here we must bring to a close our examination of Strauss and the mythic system, though we designed reviewing several other points, which want of space compels us to omit. Specially did we purpose to notice his extraordinary assumption respecting the resurrection of Jesus, where it seems, to our judgment, that the theory completely breaks down. The sudden and remarkable change which came over the desponding and discouraged disciples soon after the death of Christ, Strauss is compelled to admit, to account for the continuance and present existence of Christianity. To explain this he supposes that the disciples *imagined* that the Savior rose from the dead! Why they should imagine, or how they could imagine, such an unlooked for event, after having all hope crushed by his crucifixion, is not so easily explained. It is, however, necessary to complete the theory, and so, without proof, it is unscrupulously asserted. They *imagined* he had risen, and yet there was his dead body all this while in the tomb (for Strauss does not allow the story of stealing the body), and they might have gone at any hour to that tomb, and ascertained the fact; and so have corrected the error of imagination by the testimony of actual sight and touch! Now can any one in his senses believe

such a ridiculously absurd and improbable statement? and yet this is one of the assumptions on which the whole mythic system hinges.\*

Had we space enough we should be glad to enter more fully upon this and the other particulars alluded to; but we must forbear. We leave what has been offered to the reader, believing that enough has been said to convince him that it is certainly quite as safe to trust to the histories of Matthew and his companions, as to the criticisms of Dr. Strauss.

\*It is almost amusing to see how unconsciously Dr. Strauss has let escape him the self-conviction that he had failed to give a satisfactory explanation of this difficulty, and to show whence the disciples could possibly have gotten this imagining that Christ had risen from the dead. He says, speaking of this event, "After his death, the belief in his resurrection, *whencesoever it might come*, was more than sufficient to convince men that Jesus was the Messiah; so that the residue of what was miraculous in his life ought to be considered, not as a cause, but as a consequence, of a belief in his Messiahship."\* This "*whencesoever it might come*," shows plainly the drift of his thought, and betrays his own consciousness that he had not succeeded in proving whence the belief in the resurrection of Jesus *did* come, if not from the actual event. He makes this belief the source of the other miraculous accounts in Christ's life; but what was the source of this belief? Faith in his miracles is the result of faith in his resurrection; but what is the faith in his resurrection the result of? Here is where Strauss' speculations stagger and come to the ground again.

\* Vol. i. p. 83. Introduction, Sect. 14.

## CHAPTER XI.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED. THE DIFFERENCES IN THE  
GOSPEL HISTORIES. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM  
ANCIENT AND MODERN HISTORY.

### INTRODUCTORY.

1. NOTHING can be more unfair, or betray greater ignorance of the actual events of daily life, than to pronounce a story, told by two or three witnesses, false, because in some unimportant particulars these witnesses differ, or even contradict each other. It is a well known fact, that eye-witnesses do disagree in regard to the details of an event, and this every day, in social life and in our courts of justice, without the reality of the event itself being questioned or doubted for a moment. No two persons ever, probably, saw any single occurrence in precisely the same light, in regard to all its details; and when their observation and narrative extended to the events of several years of personal action and teaching, it would be a miracle if they should not differ or disagree in the smallest particulars of time, place, or arrangement. But no reasonable man would argue from these differences, that the whole story was falsehood or fable, or that they

destroyed the credibility of the narrators. So far from this, he would regard these slight discrepancies, or even contradictions, as to the minute details, as sure proof that the witnesses had not compared notes, or consulted together, to make their stories agree, and fit the testimony of one to that of the other. Agreement in substance, or in the main facts, and disagreement in unimportant details, is the most unexceptional evidence of truth and honesty.

2. Applying this universally acknowledged rule to the Gospel narratives, we admit the disagreement in minute circumstances, and accept the fact as proof of their integrity and authenticity. We are not troubled by the presence of these discrepancies, but we should have been very greatly troubled by their absence; for then we should have felt that the sceptic would have had good ground for the charge, that there was a combination among the writers to tell the same story. It would be, in this case, much more difficult to disprove such a charge, than to meet the objection based on their disagreement touching the details of their story. Nevertheless, as much account has been made of these differences by those who have written against the Gospels, it is proper that we should examine the condition of the question. But first let us see what is the character of these discrepancies. The following will show this.

3. Matthew says the parents of Jesus fled with him into Egypt; but Luke, not mentioning this, says they went to Jerusalem, and then returned to Galilee. There is also a seeming difference respecting the calling of Andrew, Peter, &c., as related by Matthew and John. Matthew says that Jesus cured the leper before entering the city of Capernaum; but Mark and Luke after he left it. One writer says he healed two Gadarene demoniacs; the other mentions only one. Luke says one of the malefactors



crucified with Jesus railed on him, while the other spoke to him reverently; but Matthew says they both reviled him. One evangelist says, the women went to the sepulchre early while it was yet dark; another says at dawn; and a third early at sunrise. Matthew says there was an earthquake at the time of the resurrection; while the other writers make no mention of such an event. So one historian speaks of two angels, another only of one. So Luke, in his notice of the taxing under Augustus, Cyrenius being governor of Syria, cannot easily be reconciled with profane historians. And the Theudas named in Acts v, according to Josephus, did not rebel till seven years after the date assigned by Luke—if the same person is intended in both cases.

4. These examples are sufficient to illustrate the nature of the difficulties in the evangelical narratives, and to show somewhat the force of the argument which attempts to prove from these that the narratives are not historical, or worthy of credit! That Mr. Paine should argue in this way, might be expected; but that one who has studied history as diligently and critically as Strauss has done, should make them ground of labored opposition to the historical character of the Gospels, is truly surprising, and almost mortifying.

5. What is the value of all these discrepancies put together? Do they touch a single important fact in the history of Jesus? Is there any conflict among his biographers respecting his teachings, his miracles, his character, his crucifixion, or his resurrection? Does one say he wrought miracles, and another that he did not? Does Matthew testify that he taught certain doctrines, which Luke denies? Does John say that he rose from the dead, and Mark that he did not? O no; but they differ as to the chronological succession of certain acts and discourses. They do not agree as to the precise hour, or place,

or accompaniments of some events in the narrative ; and perhaps there is not perfect harmony as to the details of the events themselves, the occasion and consequence of them.

6. Now, if such differences, omissions, contradictions, if you will, as these, are to be regarded as destroying the historical integrity of the New Testament accounts, then, adopting the same rule in the criticism of other history, ancient and modern, the foundations of all our knowledge of the past and the present, excepting only that of which we have personal experience, is broken up under our feet. There is no reliable truth in the world. No historian, no writer is to be trusted. All records of what has been transacted in our earth, is legend, myth, falsehood, intentional or unintentional. The authors of these narratives are deceivers, or are themselves deceived ; and though the narratives may, in the beginning, have had some fact, some actual occurrence at the bottom, it is now so obscured, so hopelessly mixed up with fictitious, mythical details, that it can never be discovered what it was.—This is the result of the principle, carried to its legitimate issues.

7. Paine says respecting some portions of the Gospels, that the story so far from being true “ is not even a reasonable lie.” Because the other writers omit mention of the earthquake, and the angel rolling back the stone from the sepulchre, and sitting on it, which particulars are noticed by Matthew,—therefore, he says, there was no earthquake, no angels,—and that the whole story of the resurrection is a falsehood. Prof. Strauss, with more critical science and dignity, lays out the discrepancies and difficulties of the evangelical narratives of this event, under five heads, and comes to the same conclusion—that the story is a mere legend ; that Christ never rose from the dead. The same process of analysis and comparison

of the differences between the Gospel historians is, as we have seen, applied to the prominent events of Christ's whole life, when it could be done, and the same inference drawn—that it is false in fact, a mere fable from first to last. But now let us see, as remarked, how this rule affects history generally; let us see whether the New Testament narratives are an exception to the common rule which governs historical compositions; let us see if those who are so well pleased with this kind of criticism when applied to the Gospels, are willing to abide the issue when applied to other histories. We shall illustrate the argument first, in regard to some events of ancient history; and second, in regard to certain well known facts of modern history.

## SECTION I.

### ANCIENT HISTORY: THE ARGUMENT APPLIED TO THE LIFE OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT—TO HANNIBAL'S PASSAGE OF THE ALPS.

1. THE history of *Alexander the Great* has been written wholly or in part by his own generals and companions; eye-witnesses, of course, of what they relate.—Consequently we may look for the utmost exactness and nicety, and the most perfect agreement, both in the prominent facts of their narratives, and in the accompanying details,—such, in a word, as Strauss and his critical school expect and demand from Matthew, John, &c.

2. (1.) Curtius and Strabo notice the terrible vengeance inflicted on the Branchidæ, dwelling on the river Oxus, by Alexander, who put them all to the sword in retaliation for the sacrilegious treachery of their ancestors. But the careful Arrian, whose statements come from eye-witnesses, passes over the whole affair in utter silence. According, therefore, to Arrian's account, no such event ever took place. This is Mr. Paine's rule. Omission with him is equivalent to denial.

3. (2.) The duration of Alexander's reign. Aristobulus makes him to have reigned *twelve years and four months*. According to Diodorus Siculus, *twelve years and*

*seven months* was the length of his reign ; while Eratosthenes, Josephus, &c., state it at only *twelve years*. Cornelius, Nepos, and Livy make it *thirteen years* ; and Justin, more liberal than all the rest, extends it to more than *thirty-five years* ! Delightful harmony this ! Of course, after such differences and contradictions as these, there is but one course for a reasonable man and a philosopher to take, and that is to reject the story of his reign altogether. No such person as Alexander ever lived ; or if he did, he never performed the things ascribed to him. He had no kingdom ; he did not reign at all ; otherwise we should not have had such contradictory statements, some of them coming from pretended companions of this extraordinary personage. The story of his life and reign is doubtless a mere legend, a mythical glorification of—nothing ; or at most of some obscure individual who might have some warm personal friends, who sought to make a hero of him after his death. And this will be confirmed by reference to the next particular, respecting his death.

4. (3.) The time of his death. Eumenes and Diodotus, the chroniclers of the daily affairs of this pretended conqueror and ruler, tell us he died on the *eleventh* of June, toward the close of the day. But Aristobulus and Ptolemy, who were at his bedside at the time, mention the *thirteenth* of June as the day of his death ! What more is wanting to show the legendary character of this alleged history, when eye-witnesses cannot come within two days of the death of their hero ? If I doubt the truth of the Gospel histories because they differ by *three hours* as to the time of the crucifixion of Christ ; shall I believe the pretended history of this mythical Alexander, when eye-witnesses differ *two days* as to the time of his death ! Certainly not. They cannot all be right, and the probability is that they are all wrong. The whole thing is, doubtless, a mere invention, as we have said ;

or a fabulous story gradually gathered around some village hero of Macedon, who, in some street quarrel, might have soundly beaten the boasting aristocratic Xerxes of the neighborhood. This is doubtless all there is of the matter, and it only needs some new Strauss to apply his dissecting criticism to the narratives to demonstrate this, and show the origin and progress of the myth.\*

5. *Hannibal's passage over the Alps.* This event, so important in its results to Rome, is involved in much obscurity. Livy and Polybius are the principal authorities. Livy obtained his materials from contemporary authority: for example, Cincius Alimentus, who was a captive of Hannibal, and received his information respecting the route over the mountains from the lips of the commander himself. Polybius, on the other hand, about forty years after the departure of Hannibal from Italy, himself passed over the Alps, in search of materials for his history; and in all probability met with some old men who were, in their youth, eye-witnesses of the march of the Cathaginian army over the mountains. Of course, then, his information must have been of the most direct kind, as well as Livy's, who had it from the captive of Hannibal. And yet Livy and Polybius are irreconcilably at variance with each other; there is scarcely any event of ancient history where there is, to this hour, more diversity of opinion, than with regard to this passage of the Alps by Hannibal. The following are the different points at which he is said to have passed; each based on the authorities named above, and declared to be *the* point. 1. Over

\* And what palpable contradiction respecting Bactra and Zariaspa. Arrian makes two cities out of these names, and Ptolemy mentions the two rivers on which they are severally located. But Strabo makes Bactra and Zariaspa the same place. Were there two cities? or one? or any?

Mount Viso. 2. Over Mount Genevre. 3. Over Mount Cenis. 4. Over the Little St. Bernard. 5. Over Great St. Bernard. 6. Over the Simplon. 7. Over the Julian Alps!

6. Consider, now, what a multitude of contradictory opinions we have here; and consider that all these profess to refer to Livy and Polybius as sustaining them; and consider, once more, that these authors had their information, one from a captive, who had it from Hannibal himself; and the other doubtless from those who had witnessed the passage of the Carthaginian army with their own eyes; and yet that they flatly contradict or are irreconcilably opposed to, each other! Consider all these facts, and then ask if there can be a reasonable doubt that the whole story is a fiction. It was unquestionably an allegory at first; not having even the small historical basis necessary for a myth. It was, without doubt, originally designed to illustrate the disciplining of a great mind; its successful struggles against temptation and evil, its triumphant passage over the mountain difficulties of life, and its joyful descent into the sunny plains of virtue and happiness—(Italy). The battles of Trebia, and Thrasymene, and Cannæ, are the temptations and struggles renewed again at times, in the lives of even the best men; as Paul confesses of himself—the war between the law in the members and the law of the mind. Capua, with its delicious air and fruits, its luxuries and dissipation, and the enervating fatal effect of these on Hannibal and his army, clearly reveal the final yielding of a noble soul, too confident of its own strength, to the insidious and seductive influences of sin. And the retreat of Hannibal, his return to Africa, and at last his miserable death, represent to us the final overthrow and ruin of a great and brave soul, which, though battling so long and so successfully, is overcome in some unguarded moment, and hur-

ried down into the depths of disgrace and sin, of woe and death.

7. This is plainly the intent and meaning of this supposed history, as every philosophical German critic will readily discover. The blunder began with Livy and Polybius, who mistook the object of their informants, and understood as a narrative of actual occurrences, what was designed as a parable or allegory, teaching a beautiful and important lesson to the individual soul. These material, matter-of-fact writers, who take every thing in a literal gross sense, unable to distinguish the philosophical and spiritual life from the outward form or body of a narrative, have made terrible work with ancient history ; so that it is now confusion worse confounded. It is high time that a rational criticism, following the steps of Niebuhr and Strauss, should sift out these fabulous stories of Alexander and Hannibal from ancient history, and showing their origin, design and growth, give us whatever grains of truth may remain.

8. That this view is correct respecting the exploits of this supposed Hannibal, or at least that the accounts of him are not to be received as history, will farther appear from the self-contradictions of Livy with regard to him and his Carthaginians. A few instances will suffice. In Book xxiii. 30, he states that Locri is taken by the Carthaginians ; but, turning to the following book, xxiv. 1, we find it is still in the hands of the Romans. In Book xxv. 1, he speaks of Thurii as returning *again* into the possession of the Romans ; whereas he represents it after this as going over to Hannibal for the first time. xxv. 15. In Book xxx. 45, he tells us that Scipio, who subdued Hannibal and the Carthaginians, was the first who was honored with the surname of a conquered people. But if we turn back as far as Book ii. 32, we find him saying that this honor had been bestowed on Coriolanus, more than



three hundred years before. So in Book xxx. 33, he states that Carthage gives a hundred hostages to the Romans; but, in xxxii. 2, speaking of these hostages, he says a hundred were restored, while the *remainder* (!) were sent into safe keeping at another place. In xxx. 43, he relates that there was bitter lamentation at Carthage for the loss of her fleet; but in the very next chapter he says no one lamented!\*

9. These discrepancies and plain contradictions show, to the satisfaction of every *critic*, that Livy is not writing history, however honest he may be in thinking so. He has mistaken legend for fact, and has created a Hannibal and a Carthage, and a series of actual battles and sieges, out of an allegory; and narrates the whole story with all the gravity and confidence of authentic history. His entire innocence, and the absence of all suspicion on his part, is very amusing to a critic; and equally amusing the credulity of modern writers and readers, who have been so easily duped into the belief that there really was such a person as Hannibal; that he did the wonderful things told of him; that there was such a city as Carthage, of which most of them have no proof but the *testimony* of some obscure sailors and pretended travelers, who *say* they have been there. But who knows? Sailors and travelers have said a great many things that are not true. And suppose they have visited certain ruins which they call the ruins of Carthage; what then? How do we or they know that they *are* the ruins of Carthage?

10. But beside the above we might adduce much more in proof of the position taken respecting the legendary character of this Carthage and its history. Take, for example, the story of Regulus, so intimately connected with the imaginary city. The common relation is, that

\* See Tholuck; *Voices of the Church*, p. 165, and onward.

he was put to death by its inhabitants in the most cruel manner. Yet Polybius, who is most minute in all that belongs to Regulus, and distinctly declares that he is particular to recount all his actions and history as an example to others, passes over the whole affair of his dreadful tortures in utter silence ! This he could not have done, had they been real instead of legendary. And other ancient writers contradict each other respecting his death. Some say he died of neglect and starvation ; others that he was crucified ; and others that, being enclosed in a cask stuck full of sharp nails, so that he could not rest at all, he died of exhaustion and torment. So utterly contradictory is every thing connected with this fabulous Carthage and its inhabitants.

## SECTION II.

MODERN HISTORY : JOAN OF NAPLES—JOHN MILTON—MARQUIS  
OF ARGYLL—EXAMPLES FROM PRESCOTT'S CONQUEST  
OF MEXICO—FROM BANCROFT'S UNITED STATES—  
BATTLE OF BUNKER'S HILL.

1. In looking into the pages of any modern history, we find the same state of things. The New Testament narratives are not alone; nor must they be put in the worst lot in this argument, as will be seen by the following examples.

2. As a specimen, take the case of *Joan of Naples*. Rees' Cyclopaedia informs us that, on the death of James of Majorca, in 1375, she married, *in the following year*, Otho of Brunswick for her fourth husband, and ended her life in 1382. But Mrs. Jameson, in her *Female Sovereigns*, says that after the death of James she remained *twelve years a widow*, governing with remarkable wisdom and energy, and then married Otho; i. e. five years after she was dead, according to the other account! Of course the whole story of her marriage with Otho, so far from being true, to use the classic speech of Mr. Paine, "is not even a reasonable lie."

3. Again; let us take the case of John Milton, the re-

puted author of *Paradise Lost*. The discrepancies in regard to some important particulars in his life are enough to shake the faith of any critic of the mythic school, and to bring the whole into grave doubt among those who build so confidently on the differences in the Gospel histories. Toland says he was born in the year 1606; and he wrote near the time of Milton. The parish register, and his biographer Todd, witness that he was born in 1608, on the 9th day of December. But Hallam declares that he was born in 1609! Surely, he could not have been born at all these different dates; and how do we know which is the true one? and, if you come directly to it, how do we know he was born at all? One account says he died Nov. 8, 1674; another says Nov. 9th or 10th. Todd states that Milton married into the family of Justice Powell of Sandford, and lived at Forest Hill; but Brydges says that the Powells of Sandford and the Powells of Forest Hill were not the same family, nor in any way connected. Hallam is of opinion that none of Milton's poetry, now in existence, was composed before his twenty-third year; but Brydges speaks of extant poems written in his sixteenth year!\* So the witnesses disagree and contradict each other; and, as observed, if sifted down close enough, who knows that there was a John Milton; or if there was, that he wrote *Paradise Lost*? A sound and philosophical criticism may well hesitate till these difficulties are cleared up.

4. So in regard to the death of the Marquis of Argyll. Clarendon says he was condemned and executed on the same day; but Burnet, Woodrow, and others, say he was condemned on Saturday and executed on Monday. Again Clarendon says he was hanged, but Burnet, &c., say he was beheaded. Now here we have two flat contradictions;

\* Beard's *Moral Argument*, pp. 20, 21.

and of course, *a la Strauss*, the whole story is a myth. The narrative cannot be historical with such difficulties in the way; and whether such a personage as the Marquis of Argyll ever lived, or, if he lived, whether he was condemned and publicly executed, we have no means whatever of knowing. The probability, however, is, that the thing is a fiction, gotten up to frighten rebels and those disposed to question the right of tyrants and usurpers; and that these writers, honestly enough without doubt, have taken it all for history.

5. Let us now look into Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico," and note the harmony existing among his authorities, and the companions of Cortez, and eye-witnesses of the things they relate. When the conqueror landed at Cape St. Antonio, Bernal Diaz says his army consisted of 663; another authority says 600; and another, 400. And this at a time, and under circumstances when every soldier *counted*, and was considered of the utmost importance. On one occasion, before entering into battle, he called his officers together, one witness says, to ask advice of them; another says, to tell them that he had decided without their advice. When the fleet was destroyed, that great act in the drama, the particular friend of Cortez says it was done with the knowledge and approbation of the army; another, his chaplain, and the conqueror himself, affirm that it was done without the knowledge, and to the utter consternation, of the army! The witnesses were all on the spot, and had part with the army! When the fifty Tlascalcan spies were taken, one authority says seventeen had their hands cut off; the rest their thumbs; another says the whole fifty had their hands cut off, and were sent back in this mutilated condition. Both witnesses were there, and had part in the transaction! In the awful retreat from Mexico on the "Melancholy Night," one account says the number of Spaniards slain

was 150 ; another, 200 ; another, 300 ; another, 450 ; another, 1170 ! And all these witnesses either were actors in the scene, or had their statements from those who were ! Bernal Diaz, who went through the whole bloody tragedy, says the rear guard consisted of 120, and in a few lines after says 150 of these were slain ! and a little farther on the number of the slain rises to 200 ! ! \*

6. Now, after such unparalleled discrepancies and contradictions, is there any other conclusion to which we can come, following the criticism of Dr. Strauss and his school, than that the whole history of this pretended conquest of Mexico is mere fiction ; a legend, the manifest object of which is to exalt the valor and fame of the Spanish cavaliers ? Nothing is more palpable to the reader of the narrative, than the " tendency to glorify " these mythic heroes in every possible way. That certain Spaniards might have visited the shores of the Gulf, and even penetrated some distance into the interior—that they might also have had a quarrel or two with some wandering savages, and shot or wounded some of them—this is probable, or at least possible ; but as for believing the Don Quixotic story about a handful of soldiers conquering a vast empire, as Mexico is represented to have been, with its hundreds of thousands of troops, with such feeble means, and in the face of such gigantic difficulties—this is too absurd, too monstrous a prodigy for the belief of any sound and critical mind. And the manifold contradictions, disagreements, and exaggerations of the witnesses, show so plainly the mythical origin and character of the narrative, show so plainly that the authors are not writing history, however honest they may be in thinking

\* Prescott's Conquest of Mexico. The examples are taken at random, mostly from Vol. i. See pages 263, 283, 376, 462 ; also Vol. ii. 376, 377. *Notes.*

they are, that it is wonderful the story has been believed as truth and fact so long.

7. Look now into Bancroft's History of the United States, and see if there is any room for sceptical criticism there. One or two examples from a multitude: In the narrative of the great rebellion in Virginia in 1677, on the authority of the True Account in Burk, it is stated that, "of those who put themselves on trial, none escaped being convicted and hanged." On the other hand, this same witness, some fifty pages back, had positively affirmed "the acquittal of ten in one day!" In reference to the first Swedish settlement in Delaware, a host of authorities fix it about the year 1631; while the Albany Records and other authorities bring it down to 1638—a difference of seven years. So in the matter of imprisoning the Catholic bishops, Penn is represented by Mackintosh as "lending himself to the measures of the king;" but Lawton states positively that "Penn was against the commitment of the bishops," and "pressed the king exceedingly to set them at liberty." So contradictory are the witnesses in this history.\* A just philosophical criticism, therefore, pronounces the "great rebellion," the Swedish settlement in Delaware, and the imprisonment of the Catholic bishops, so many myths, the basis of which cannot well be defined. The question whether there was a country called Virginia, or a tract of land known as Delaware at that period, we will not now subject to investigation; but it is a singular fact that several authors, who wrote at the time specified, do not make the slightest mention of such places!

8. Let us take one other and more familiar example; the Battle of Bunker's Hill, so called. Here is another instance of how little real history there is in the world,

\* Bancroft's United States, Vol. ii. pp. 232, 286, 297.

according to the philosophy of Strauss, Hume, and their imitators, and of how much we owe to the forbearance of a merciful criticism.

(1.) Weems, in his life of Washington, says "*fifteen hundred* men were sent to throw up an entrenchment on Bunker's Hill on the night of the 16th of June." But Goodrich says only "*one thousand*" were ordered to this work.

(2.) Weems says "the British moved to the attack with *rattling drums and incessant discharges of muskets and great guns*." Paulding, on the contrary, states that they "came steadily on, *silent as the grave!*"

(3.) Weems states that "by order of Gage, the beautiful port of Charlestown, of *three hundred* fine buildings, was wrapped in flames." But Goodrich says that "*six hundred buildings*" were destroyed,—a slight difference ! But this is not all.

(4.) The supposed battle has always gone by the name of Bunker's Hill Battle ; but it is well known now that no battle was fought on Bunker's Hill, and no entrenchment thrown up there. The great monument, about which so much noise is made, and which was raised expressly to commemorate this fabulous conflict, is itself a virtual admission of the fact ; for it is erected, not on Bunker's, but Breed's Hill ! How does a monument on Breed's Hill prove that a battle was fought on Bunker's Hill !

(5.) So it has been commonly believed that General Putnam commanded the American troops on this memorable occasion, as it is called. This is one of the first articles in the historical creed of an American. But some years ago a distinguished citizen of Massachusetts, who claimed to have commanded a company in the battle, published an account denying that Putnam commanded the troops on the Hill. The friends of the General replied



with numerous affidavits of pretended eye-witnesses, proving (?) that he did command the American troops throughout the action. This brought out a rejoinder from the aforesaid distinguished individual, accompanied also with a host of affidavits and certificates from eye-witnesses, proving (?) that Putnam not only did not command, but was not on the hill during the battle !\*

9. After such an array of discrepancies and contradictions, after such bewilderment and utter confusion among eye-witnesses, can any man who has the least claim to logic, philosophy, or even common sense, believe the story of Bunker's Hill Battle ? Can any well balanced mind be so far blinded and warped by patriotic prejudices, so far hurried away by the desire to "glorify" our country, as to take for actual history what is so manifestly legend, a mere myth ? What palpable contradictions, what opposite and positive assertions ; not in regard to minute and trifling details, but respecting the most important features of the affair—as the commander of the troops and even the place where the battle was fought ! Now, can it be possible, if this battle had been a real event, that such momentous facts could, in so few years, have been forgotten ? nay, that even those who profess to have had part in the terrible conflict, could not tell where it was they fought so valiantly, or who had command during the action ? And these absurdities are only a part

\* See Weems' Washington, p. 74 ; Paulding's Life of Washington, i. p. 150. Goodrich's United States, p. 132. Also a most admirable article in the Christian Examiner for March 1846, "Doubts concerning the Battle of Bunker's Hill." It is an application of Hume's philosophy to this memorable event, after the manner of that celebrated work of the archbishop of Dublin, "Historic Doubts relative to Napoleon Bonaparte." In both cases the argument is reduced to an absurdity in a most amusing manner. I wish they might be read of all.

of a large number which present themselves to the critical reader. The whole narrative, from first to last, is beset with improbabilities and military blunders; and every where the mythic element appears, showing the probable origin, design, and growth of the legend. To believe the story of this fabulous battle true, to believe it to be actual history, in the face of all the contradictions, difficulties, and unhistorical features, with which it is overloaded, requires a degree of credulity which only an American can be expected to have; and an absence of philosophy and critical acumen, which the most orthodox advocate of all-believing patriotism might envy!

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1. And now, in few words, let us bring the argument of this chapter to a close. We have endeavored to show the weakness of the argument which attempts to destroy the historical character and integrity of the Gospel narratives, because of their discrepancies and disagreements in regard to some of the details of some of the events described. We started with the proposition, that the same course of argument and criticism which Strauss, Hume, Paine, &c. had pursued in regard to the New Testament records, if applied universally, would destroy the foundations of all history, modern as well as ancient—that there are no reliable records in existence, if this kind of criticism is to be allowed in all the results claimed for it—that we cannot believe any statements we hear; nay, not even what we see with our own eyes, for some one else may start up to deny their witness. In fine, if we follow out the argument to its last results, our own life cannot be established as a historical fact; and, for aught we know, we are allowed to believe we really live only by the kind forbearance of a philosophical criticism.

And we tremble to think that some Strauss may by and by rise up and, no longer merciful, demonstrate to us that existence itself is only a myth; and, throwing us all, himself included, into the crucible of his criticism, reduce all to the gaseous essence of infinite negation, and leave us as impalpable and unreal as the shadow of a ghost!

2. But seriously, a very little thought will show the true value of this sort of criticism. The differences in respect to the details of an event do not affect the reality of the event itself. There is no difference of testimony with regard to this. For example: In regard to Alexander the Great—the main facts of his life, character, reign and conquests, are all agreed to; and the precise hour or day of his birth or death, the exact length of his reign, the particular date of a battle, &c., do not affect the integrity of the facts in the least. So the great question is, whether Hannibal crossed the Alps at all, not the exact point at which he passed; and the disagreement respecting the last unimportant particular does not touch the first important fact, about which all the witnesses agree.

3. The same remarks may be made in regard to the other examples named. It is a matter of no consequence whether the Marquis of Argyll was put to death on Saturday or on Monday; whether he was hanged or beheaded. The real question is whether he was put to death at all, which no one doubts. So what matters it whether Cortez had a hundred soldiers more or less in his enterprise; whether he burned his fleet with or without the consent of his army? The only point that we need concern ourselves with is, whether he and his brave Spaniards conquered the mighty empire of the Montezumas. And who doubts this? And who doubts that the Battle of the 17th of June was actually fought, because historians differ as to the number of American troops, or the number of

houses burned in Charlestown? or because those who fought in the battle disagree, and flatly contradict each other, as to who commanded in the action? or because the conflict is known as Bunker's Hill Battle, though really fought on Breed's Hill? These details, however differently stated, do not affect the universal belief in the main, and only essential fact, viz: that the battle was fought.

4. So in regard to the Gospel histories. It is matter of little moment whether the writers do or do not agree in all the minute details of the events described. What is it whether Jesus wrought a certain miracle on one spot of ground or on another, on this day or on that? whether one angel was seen at the sepulchre or two? whether Matthew or John is right, as to the calling of Andrew, Peter, &c., or both wrong? They all agree in respect to the great facts of Christ's life, character, teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection. On these momentous points there is no difference of opinion or testimony. Not a syllable is uttered that renders their faith or witness in regard to these facts doubtful. Here there is but one testimony, one voice, one heart—and in confirmation of their witness, we have before us the indisputable and irrefutable evidence of the present existence of Christian Doctrine, Christian Faith, and Christian Civilization.

## CHAPTER XII.

**OBJECTIONS ANSWERED—INSPIRATION COMMON TO ALL MEN.**

**CHRIST'S INSPIRATION NOT SPECIAL; THE TRUTHS HE**

**TAUGHT DISCOVERABLE WITHOUT THE DIRECT**

**HELP OF GOD; WOULD HAVE BEEN**

**BROUGHT OUT BY THE NATURAL**

**AND NECESSARY PROGRESS**

**AND DEVELOPMENTS**

**OF THE RACE.**

1. It is well known that in these days much as been said and written for the purpose of showing that God did not give to Christ any knowledge or truth directly, or in any way differently from that in which he gives them to all men; that in the reception of those revelations, or in the inspiration of Jesus, there was no departure from the ordinary method of the divine communications with all souls; that the discovery of the sublime truths revealed by Christ to the world, and similar truths, were, and are, within the reach of every man, who will as faithfully obey all the laws of being;—in a word that every man may be a Christ, if he will; and if he will live as truly as Christ lived, may know as much of the mind and purpose of God, may sound as far the depths of infinite wisdom, and bring forth as great, and even greater revela-

tions than he who received the spirit without measure, and took his place at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

2. And hence, very naturally, comes the conclusion that Christ is not to be followed as a Master and Savior ; but we may walk with him as a companion, as far as he walks wisely and well. We also are inspired, as well as he ; and as he had a Jewish education, and Jewish prejudices, he could not but be influenced by these, as also by the circumstances of his position, and by the character of the age in which he lived. For these influences we must make due allowances in judging of the man, and of his teachings ; and in our own inquiries must set them aside, and be free. In a word, Jesus is to be regarded as a help and not as a guide ; as a good man, having much wisdom, but whose superior, both in goodness and wisdom, may yet appear. In the meantime every man is inspired, every man has within a guide to, and judge of, all truth ; an inner Christ, which, if he will heed it, will show him the way in which he should go. No Master, no Leader, or Savior, must be allowed a place superior to this universal Christ, this ever present inspiration.

3. I would speak of these speculations respectfully and kindly ; but yet I may be allowed to express the conviction that, if we may judge from such exhibitions of the infallibility of this inner philosophic Christ as we have had in these latter days, the world will still persist in following, with all his imperfections, the plain, historical Christ of the Gospels, and feel that thus they are infinitely more secure of finding Truth. And of this Universal Inspiration I cannot withhold the declaration of my fears that, judging from the extremely loose, vague and indefinable notions respecting it, entertained by its advocates, it will prove to them a mere phantom. Nay, if I do not err, it will prove an ignis fatuus, which, though

now they seem to tread on solid ground, will eventually lead them into swamps and quagmires, where, getting in deeper and deeper at every step, they will finally be strangled in the mud and water; and in the end, they and their inspiration together sink down wholly out of sight.

4. As regards this important question of Inspiration and Revelation, the same remark applies that was made respecting Miracles. We must know what we mean by the terms employed, otherwise nothing will be gained by the inquiry. One source of confusion is using words with a half-dozen different meanings attached, instead of one. Now if we would accomplish any thing, we must affix to the words "Revelation," "Inspiration," &c., some precise and specific thought or idea, and then use them always to express that thought or idea. In this way only can we expect to make any progress in our investigations, and look to gather some fruit from our labors.

5. Now, that God reveals himself directly to the soul of man, to a certain extent, will not, it is believed, be questioned by any one. God makes himself known, in some measure, in the fact that he has created man in his own image. He reveals himself in the truest affections of the heart, in the noblest faculties of the soul. He reveals himself to the devout and thoughtful mind in all the glorious beauty of the outer world. The heavens that bend over us so lovingly; the earth that rejoices beneath our tread; the solemn sea, always changing, yet always the same; the plants, from the cedar of Lebanon that holds companionship with the skies, down to the moss upon the stone, or the sea-weed on the shore; all living things, from man the noblest downward to the crawling worm, or the microscopic animalcule—all these have somewhat to say of God; in all these he immeasurably reveals himself and his Truth to the waiting world.

6. But that this is all the revelation which God makes of himself to man ; that this is enough for all the wants of the soul ; that it is a sufficient guide for the present, or a sufficient teacher of the things pertaining to the infinite future, will not, I think, be affirmed by any one who has given diligent thought to the subject. The history of the nations of the earth, as we have seen, clearly shows that some thing more than this general revelation of truth and duty, is necessary to bring man forward to the perfection of which he is manifestly capable. The darkness and ignorance, the sin and shame, which have overshadowed the face of the earth, have very distinctly witnessed to the great truth, that there is need of a *special* as well as general inspiration ; need of *special messengers*, sent directly of God, and endowed with a super-ordinary measure of the divine spirit and wisdom ; and so fitted to do the work of teachers and saviors for their fellows. This seems to be the voice of history and reason in regard to the matter.

7. Hence, when in the providence of God there is need of a leader, a savior, a divine teacher, we find a Moses, and Isaiah, a Jesus, a Paul, sent into the world as inspired men ; receiving, at first hand from God, and for a specific work, a measure of wisdom and truth, greater than their fellows. And this inspiration is the direct gift of God, and not, so far as we have any data for judgment, the reward of prior merit on their part ; or the natural result of a more perfect obedience to the physical and spiritual laws of our nature. And, moreover, this inspiration of knowledge and truth is manifestly given to these chosen men, not so much for their own good as for the good of others ; not as a matter of personal benefit or use, but that they might thereby become benefactors and saviors to their race, and do for it some work that needed to be done, and could not be done without this divine help.



8. God had sent such divine men into the world before the advent of Christ, but he was greater than all who had preceded him; and to him and to no other, the spirit was given without measure, and he was sent to reveal the highest truth concerning God, and duty, and the destiny of the human soul beyond the present life. In Christ we have the most perfect exhibition of God's character and truth the world has ever seen. He is declared to be the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; and it was confessed by those who heard him, that he spake as never man spake before. And from him have come to the world those mighty spiritual truths which, but for him, so far as we have any means of determining, the world had never known; truths by the power of which, more than all things else, the soul is made strong, and lifted above the heavy atmosphere of the earth into the clear transparent atmosphere of heaven.

9. It may be profitable, therefore, for this reason, to devote a portion of our labor to the inquiry, How far are we indebted to Christ for truth? What are our obligations to him and to the New Testament, so far as regards the present faith and religious light enjoyed by the world? We shall consider the subject under three separate heads of inquiry.

(I.) THE CHARACTER OF GOD AS A UNIVERSAL FATHER—  
OR HIS PARENTAL RELATION TO THE HUMAN RACE.

10. How much did the world know of this grand and beautiful truth, independent of special inspiration? Look at the superstitions of the pagan world; their belief in a thousand gods, of as many different characters, "partial, passionate, unjust, whose attributes were rage, revenge and lust." So far from believing in any one God as the

Father of man, loving all with parental affection, they were in constant fear of their fierce deities, and dreaded them as tyrants rather than trusted them as friends and benefactors. The nations had not the slightest conception of such a God as that revealed by Jesus; nor had they in their highest reaches of thought ever dreamed of an infinite deity, the one and only God, as the Father of all men! This was far out beyond the sphere of their philosophy or their faith. And after wandering in darkness thousands of years, they were no nearer the discovery of this, than in the beginning. And though the Jews had dim glimmerings of this truth, they obtained it only by revelation direct from heaven; only through those divine men who had walked with God, and to whom he had given, with measure, of his holy spirit, whereby they were enabled to see in part what Christ, having the spirit without measure, saw and revealed in its full glory!

11. And now, we repeat it—What could we have known of this but for Christ? How have found out the true character of God as a universal Father, had it not been for testimony of one specially inspired to reveal it? By what ordinary process, by what natural exercise of the intellect, could this truth have been brought down from heaven? Granting all that may be justly claimed on the ground of general inspiration, still, do we see in this a key of explanation? If this were sufficient to develop the great truth, yet in four thousand years it utterly failed to do it. If all men have within them the elements of this and like truth, yet these elements have never combined themselves into revelation. If they have the faculty, rightly improved, of discovering all necessary religious truth, yet the faculty has been so perverted, that hitherto they have wholly failed in matters of the most moment.

12. Such was confessedly the condition of the world prior to the birth of Christ; and in such case, what was

to be done ? The sheep had gone astray ; shall the shepherd go, or send, in search of them, or shall they be left to be irrecoverably lost ? Mankind had entirely perverted the faculty of discovering most necessary truth, truth inseparable from the virtue and happiness of the race. They had put out the light given them, and were staggering like drunken men in total darkness. What shall be done, if no messenger can be sent, specially prepared of God ? How shall the evil be remedied, if no man is, or can be, directly and super-humanly inspired with wisdom and truth ? Surely something like this is needed now, or the world can have no deliverance. Some Christ must be raised up above his fellows, into whom God will breathe his divine energy and truth ; or the wisdom of heaven is at fault, and the universal soul is darkened forever ! But the emergency was met. Christ came, and with him the glorious truths which were needed for the redemption of man. For the first time the veil was put away, and the serene beauty of God's character was revealed to the world. For the first time, men looked up to heaven and with unutterable joy beheld the face of a Father ! O blessed in its influences on the heart was this holy truth, declared of Christ, in all its wondrous loveliness, to the rejoicing nations that had been so long unconsciously waiting for it. Now, as never before, they saw the harmony and unity of creation, and they began to understand the divine mystery, thus unfolded, of the oneness of all souls with God !

13. They were no longer friendless orphans, but the acknowledged children of a living Parent, of the almighty Ruler of the universe. They were no longer hopeless and helpless outcasts in the great wilderness of Life, but they had a place in their Father's house, and were heirs and joint-heirs with Christ, the elder brother, of a glorious and imperishable inheritance. All things

now, in the light of the unity and parental character of God, began to assume a new aspect, and to fall into their true positions. Life took a new and deeper meaning, and the relations of the soul to the Deity were developed one after another, till the presence of God was felt to be every where ; and faith in the watchfulness of his providence, and the tenderness of his love, filled the heart with the holiest trust and joy. And while the dawn of " peace on earth and good will to man " began to open upon them, they gladly joined in the angelic ascription of " Glory to God in the highest ! "

14. And now we return again to the inquiry.—If it had not been for Christ, how and when would the world have discovered this momentous and joyful truth ? If God had not spoken with him as he does not speak to the race generally ; if he had not specially inspired him with a knowledge of this truth, in a way differing from, and above that in which his spirit usually operates upon the minds of men, how should we have learned the divine unity, and the character of God as a universal Parent ? If it could have been discovered without the aid of a special inspiration, without the help of Christ, why was it not in the thousands of years that rolled by before Jesus trod our earth ? why at least was not some approach to it made ?

15. So far from this, even with regard to the first point, the Unity and Supremacy of God, the world, instead of advancing, as age after age went by, had departed farther and farther from it. When Christ came into the world, the nations were removed to an infinitely greater distance from this fundamental Truth, than in the early ages, when God walked with his first children in the garden, and held familiar speech with the old Patriarchs.

16. What prospect, then, was there that, without God's special help, men would get back from the awful night

which had gathered about them, into the warm, blessed day again? If, hitherto, they had only sunk deeper and deeper into darkness and error, what hope was there, what token in their history, that they could have changed the whole course of things, and, without a revelation, without a guide, have turned back upon their track, and struggled up to the summit of God's eternal truth? None! verily, none at all; and to say this, or assume this, is to speculate in the face of history and facts!

17. And as regards the second point, the Parental relation of the Deity to the human race—the beautiful and uplifting truth, that God is the Father of all men, a Father in spirit and in deed, loving them with a tender, and watchful, and never wearying affection,—from this too, instead of getting nearer, they were departing farther and farther; and nothing appears in their history, in their philosophy or their religion, independent of revelation, to justify any reasonable hope that they would, without God's special help, have ever attained to it. The whole spirit of their theology and worship, and its influence upon the popular life and manners, show very clearly that nothing was more distant from their thought than the truth which reveals God as a Universal Parent.

18. To Christ, therefore, is the world indebted for this sublime doctrine—a doctrine so full of instruction, so full of hope and joy, so fitted to impart spiritual strength, and to lift the soul toward heaven; in a word, so fraught in every way with the present and future blessedness of man. He first unfolded and applied the truth to the heart and the life; he only understood and showed its greatness and inestimable worth to the afflicted and suffering, to the wayward and wandering; its influence upon the virtue and peace of the world; its power to sanctify and save. Whatever, therefore, the world has gained through this truth; whatever progress it has made, by its power, in a

divine life ; whatever of comfort and happiness it has breathed into the crushed heart ; whatever light it has thrown upon the solemn mysteries of life and death,—all this we owe to Christ, and with the devoutest reverence and love we ought to acknowledge it.

(II.) THE UNITY OF THE HUMAN RACE, OR THE UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD OF MAN.

19. This grand revelation, closely connected with the one already considered, requires a similar method of reasoning to show its bearing on the subject in hand. And from the direct connection named, it may be the more briefly and readily exposed, because of the application to it of much that has already been offered.

20. Let me say, however, in the outset, that in speaking of the universal brotherhood of man as a Christian doctrine, there is meant something more than the vague admission that all men are human beings ; that they have minds and bodies somewhat similar in their general constitution ; that they live on the same earth, and merely, as an abstract thing, have a common origin ;—something more is meant than that, like some earthly families, they are united only in the single point of the same parentage, while the members are sundered in all their interests, pursuits, hopes and joys.

21. No, not this—but when we speak of the common brotherhood of our race, we mean that oneness of being and interests which shed its radiance into the soul of the apostle of Jesus, when he uttered that sublime and wonderful truth, not yet half understood, “ Now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee ; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. For whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one

member be honored, all the members rejoice with it ;"—we mean that unity of hope and prayer, of sympathy and love, that response of heart to heart, that mysterious and beautiful attraction of soul to soul, which lies below all discord, below all sin and wrong, the key note of Universal Harmony—we mean that infinitely blessed union of each in all, and all in each, and all in God, which lives through all life, and in all time. This is what is meant, and this it is which constitutes the glory and power of Christ's revelation of the common brotherhood of man !

22. And now, let me ask, what had been done toward the discovery of this truth, before the birth and mission of Christ ? What had the universal inspiration, claimed for our race, accomplished towards bringing it out from the night of ignorance and unbelief in which it slept ! And what reason have we to believe that the rosy light of it would ever have gladdened our earth, if it had not been for God's special help ; if Jesus, having the truth from him by gift, at first hand, had not spoken it forth in earnest, burning speech to the souls of men ?

23. Look at the condition of the world before the coming of the Anointed,—nation divided as natural enemies against nation ; tribe opposed to tribe, as in obedience to a law of nature ; war, oppression, slavery, and murder sanctioned as the voice of the gods, who had set men in life-conflict with each other, and had so ordered the affairs of the world. And these doctrines taught by legislators and sages, by philosopher and priest. In Egypt, the cradle of religion and wisdom, at Athens, at Rome, men declared to be, not brothers, but one portion set against another as natural foes—and this an arrangement of divine providence !

24. And even now, behold the desolations of war, oppression and hatred in Christian lands. And in Christian churches, how little is this sublime doctrine of the unity

of our race understood or developed. Even now, after a lapse of eighteen hundred years, how little has been done to realize its teachings ; how little has been done to form our daily life, our trade, our society, and legislation, and government, upon its broad and generous principles. With his earnest words still ringing in our ears, with all the power of his divine life and example still before us, with all the light that has been thrown upon this great and beautiful truth, so fraught with the highest interests of humanity,—yet, after all, how infinitely beyond the wisest and best of our race, is still the humble and loving Christ of the New Testament !

25. And when I consider these things, it is not easy to leave unwritten the words that come to me in rebuke of those who, having learned this divine doctrine, refuse to confess their obligations ;—who, owing to Christ and the New Testament all the light and knowledge they have of the grand truth of our common brotherhood, and feeling lifted up as they catch glimpses of its glory, ungratefully turn their backs upon them with a sneer ! Or, if not this, they say to Christ in the pride of their stolen knowledge, “ We owe thee nothing, or little at best. We also are inspired, we feel this truth revealed in our souls ; and if thou hadst not spoken it, soon we should ; if thou hadst delayed a little, the world had been before thee.”

26. Ah, I would like, if it were possible, that these men should be thrown back three thousand years into the deep night of Paganism, and then let them preach from their own inspiration, of the paternity of God, and the brotherhood of our race. Place them on some desolate spot, before Christ lived or taught, and to which no ray of light from the Hebrew Scriptures had ever penetrated,—and there, with wet garments, shivering in the cold air, and the dense vapors and fogs of that great night about them, tell them to look up to heaven, and see how many



stars they can count! And then, take them out from this, and place them where they now stand, in the warm bright day of Christian Truth, and they will speak more reverently of the New Testament, and draw near to Christ with a more humble and thankful heart!

(III.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION, AND A FUTURE  
LIFE OF BLESSEDNESS.

27. In this department of our inquiry we are presented with one of the most important points of the discussion. And to make our position intelligible, and give the argument its weight, it may be well to make a few observations in the way of preliminary explanation.

27. We are far from pretending that the idea of a future life never entered the human mind before Christ came; or that the doctrine of a future life was not taught before he taught it. It is readily admitted that the pagan philosophers speculated on this subject, and that the pagan nations had some rude, low and sensual notions of an existence after death; and this ages before Jesus was born. And it is well known also, that the Hebrews had vague, indefinite opinions respecting a future life, and that it was taught by the priests and pharisees, and believed by the people generally.

29. But it will be remembered that our argument covers the whole ground of special inspiration, as well as the claims of Christ in this respect. And while we affirm that, whatever real light the Hebrews had on this subject, was from special inspiration; our philosophical friends must show that the heathen did not borrow from them, before the admission we have made can avail them any thing. They must show that these nations were not descendants of Noah; that the faith of the old patriarchs, who walked with God, had not reached at all into the sur-

rounding regions ; that neither the Magi of Babylon, nor the priests of Egypt, had ever heard of Moses or the prophets ; that neither on India nor Assyria, neither on Greece nor Rome, had a single ray of light fallen from the people of God. All this must be done, before the pagan doctrine of a future life will weigh at all against the present argument.

30. Having said thus much on this point, I would offer a word by way of making a proper distinction between the doctrine of the church, and the doctrine of Christ, respecting the future life through a resurrection. We do not recognize as taught of Christ, that doctrine which affirms that there will be such a resurrection of the body as shall leave us as imperfect as we are now ; or rather as shall make immortal our present imperfections—which shall leave us still subject to all the weaknesses, the frailties, and passions, and prejudices, and hates, and all the manifold evils, of our present condition. This is not the Christian doctrine.

31. Nor do we allow that Christ taught the church doctrine of the future life, which declares the separation of the great family of man ; some being given over to infinite torment, and others to infinite joy and glory,—so making the future life which follows, or is consequent on the resurrection, a life of blessedness to a portion of our race, and to the rest, the dearest friends, the nearest relatives of these, it may be, a life of unutterable woe. This also is not the doctrine of the Christian Gospel.

32. The great truth which Christ revealed from God, teaches us that the resurrection is the laying aside all that pertains to our earthly and mortal condition ; while the moral and redeeming influence of divine Truth is brought to bear upon the naked soul, with no clouds or darkness intervening. The spirit of God comes directly into relation with our spirits, and exerts its holy power,

the omnipotence of Love, in purifying the affections, in restoring all to harmony, till the last shadow of discord and evil is removed, and the soul is renewed in the glorious beauty of the heavenly image, and made "equal unto the angels of God." This is the grand and joyful revelation of Christ touching the resurrection from the dead.

33. And the future life? *There* is no darkness, no sorrow, nor pain, nor death. There all the loved and lost of our earthly life are found again, clothed in the white garments of immortal purity and blessedness. There the long separated shall be reunited and forever; and those that have suffered together, shall rejoice together with joy unutterable. There the estranged and hostile of earth shall be reconciled; and those who here walked in darkness and error shall go forth into the light of eternal truth, and walk with angels. There all the holiest affections shall have room for actions, and the deepest love of the soul shall find all that it seeks, and its hitherto unanswered yearnings shall all be met and satisfied!

34. And there too, the noblest faculties of the soul, its loftiest powers, shall find room and occasion for development. There God will reveal himself as never to the spirit while in its earthly tabernacle. The omnipresence of his being, the harmony of his attributes, the extent and wondrous glory of his works; worlds on worlds, suns on suns, and systems on systems beyond the reach of thought, that circle on their way through the trackless fields of space, will burst upon its glad and astonished vision. Oh how glorious is the destiny of the soul, forever rising from wonder to wonder, on never-wearying wing; gathering new strength and new revelations at every step of its flight; its spiritual vision clearer and stronger as it approaches nearer to the great Central Sun; its field of operations an infinite universe, and endless

years its life-time ! How glorious, how inspiring is this view of the future life !

35. And this is the Christian doctrine. This is the revelation which Christ has made of the resurrection and future existence of the soul—an existence of incorruptible purity, of endless progress in knowledge and glory, an existence of infinite blessedness, in communion with God, with all that is holy and beautiful and true !

36. And now let me ask, What did the world know of such a resurrection and such a future life as this, before Christ revealed it ! How near did the gross and earthly views of the pagan multitude, or the vague and misty speculations of the philosophers and poets, approach to the severe and beautiful simplicity of this doctrine of Christ ? How near even does the Christian church itself approach to it now, after eighteen centuries have gone by since it was first revealed in its fulness ? And since it be so even now with a revelation, what must it have been before ? And how, by what possible ordinary process, could the sublime doctrine of Jesus have been attained ? If he was not specially informed of God's plan and purpose with regard to the future life ; if God did not communicate this truth to him in a way different from, or more direct than, that in which his spirit operates upon other men, how came he in possession of it ? How should the son of a Jewish carpenter, whose life had been one of toil, rise so far above the wisest and best of his race ? For where do you find this sublime truth, but with him ? We press this ;—If there be no special inspiration in Christ, whence came this truth ? By what law of mind could the world have discovered it ? In what way was the infinite mind to be fathomed, and this truth brought out ? By what kind of mental or moral skill was the secret counsel of God to be laid open, and his purposes respecting the soul beyond death, disclosed to the world ?

Who did do this before Christ, or made any progress toward it? Who *could* do it, without God's permission and help?

37. Verily, if we may trust to history and palpable facts, the answer is plain. No man had revealed this; no man could reveal it, except God were with him. The inspiration claimed for the race was manifestly not sufficient for this. And if it had ever been gifted with an inspiration sufficient for bringing down out of heaven these glorious truths of the future life, yet it had utterly wasted it. When Christ came, the last ray of certain light had disappeared; the last taper was burning dimly and flickeringly on the altar of hope and faith; and the nations gathered about it watching the trembling flame with troubled hearts, knowing that all about them and above them was a starless and voiceless night! But when Christ came, the beautiful star of Bethlehem rose, and shedding its radiance into the valley of the shadow of death, discovered to the world the way to heaven and Immortal Life! And to make the way certain, and that we might have courage to enter it, Jesus himself descended into the dark valley, passed through it, and went upward on his shining track into the heavens.

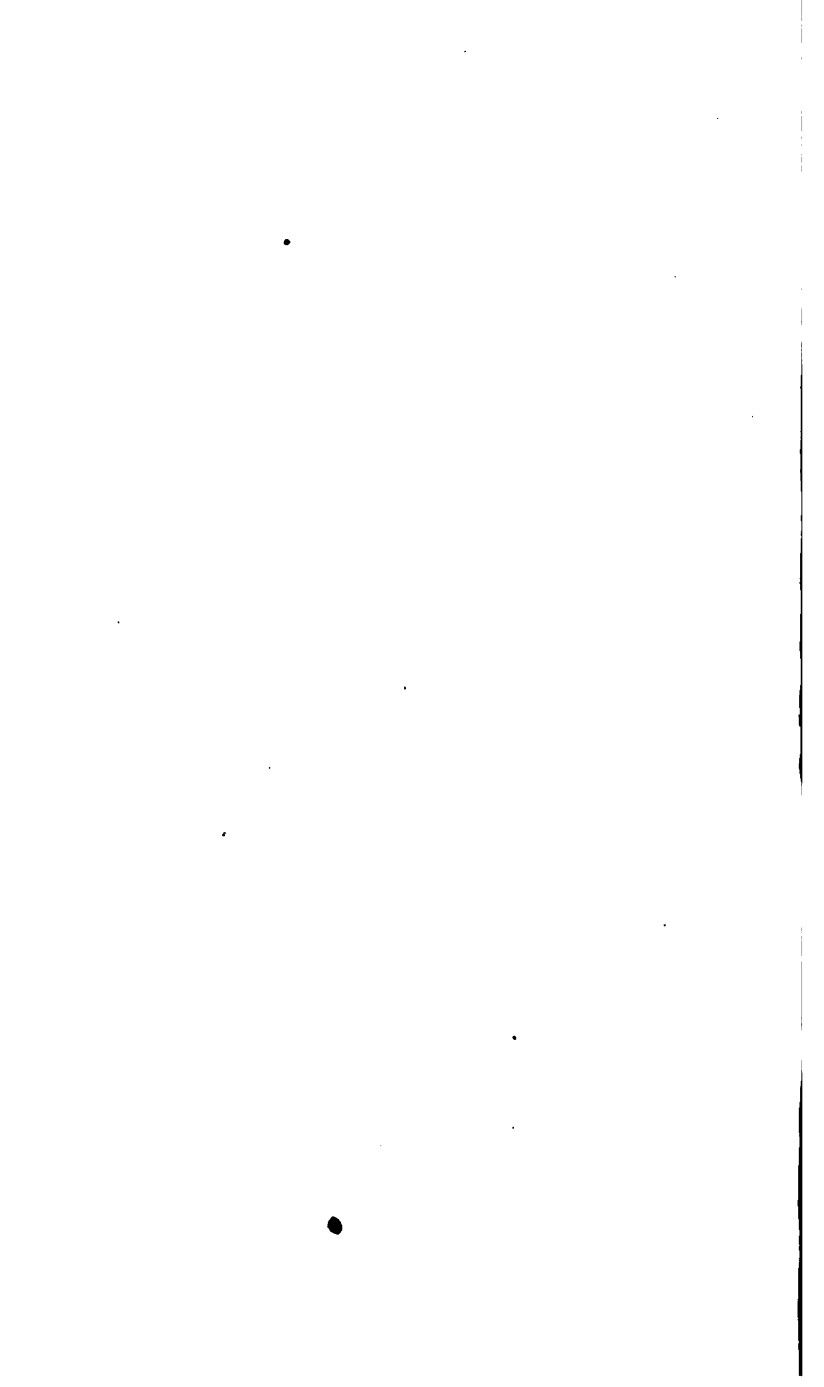
38. All the certain light, then, that we have respecting the future life; all the demonstration of its reality; all that we know of its character, of its glory and blessedness, we owe to Christ. And all that we know of Christ, we owe to the New Testament. But for this, his life and teachings would have had no record; would not have come to us at all. Strike out the New Testament as authoritative history, and you strike out the foundation on which it all rests; you dry up the source of our information. You know nothing of Christ, of the truths he has revealed, or the duties he has taught. You know nothing of the paternity of God,—nothing of the

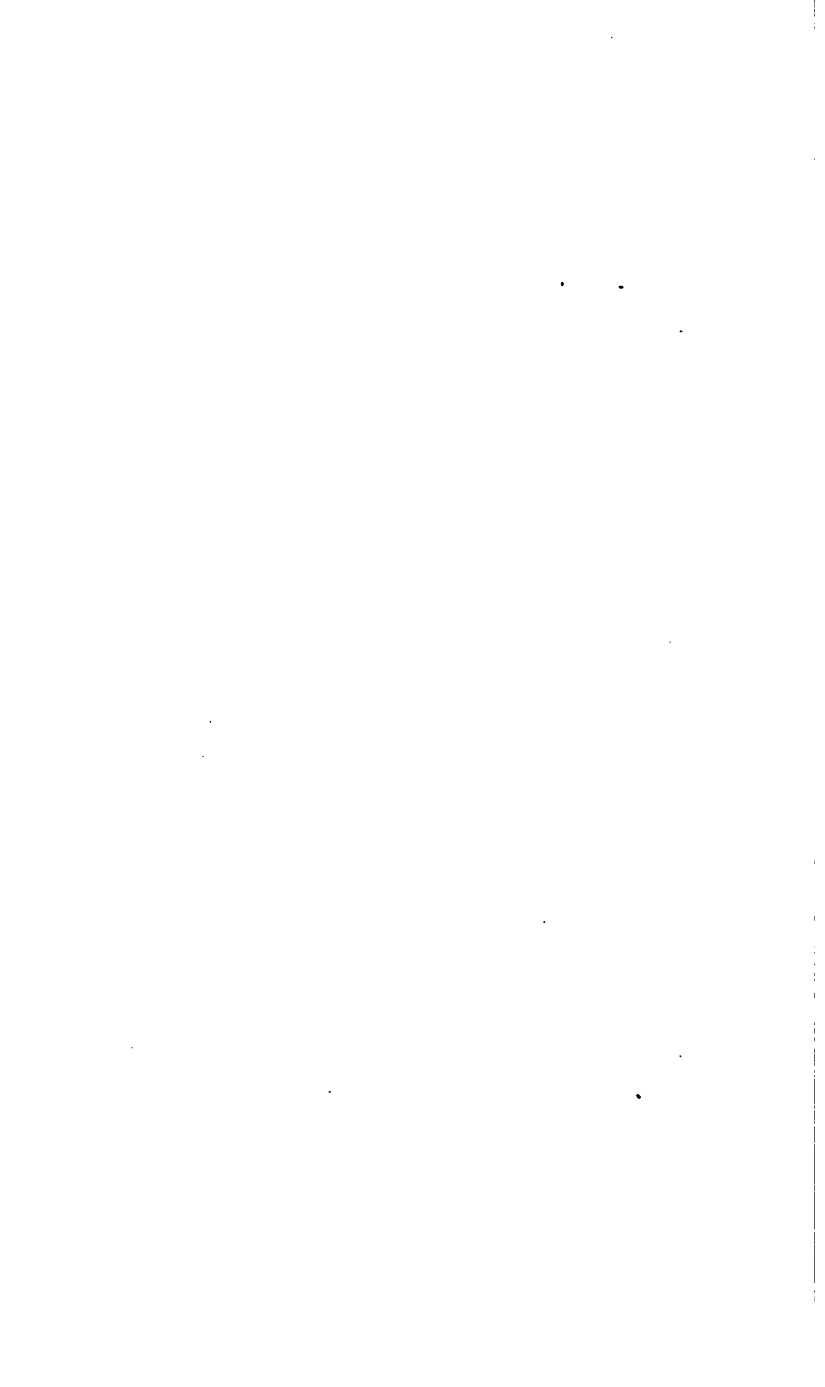
common brotherhood of man'; nothing of the resurrection from the dead, and the immortal and blissful life beyond. You fall back again into the deep night of the Past—and all is dark, and silent, and hopeless!

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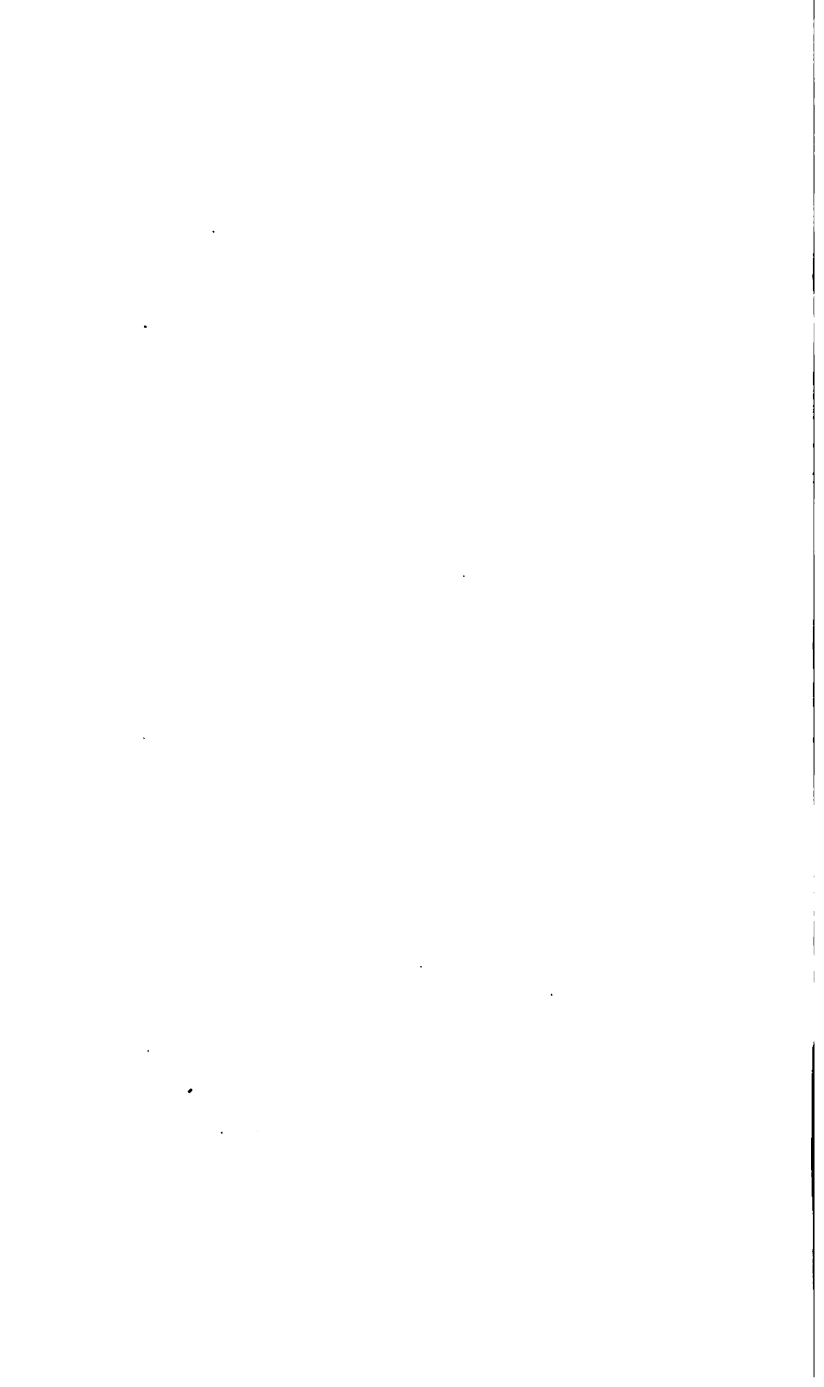
### CONCLUSION.

WE have now arrived at the close of our inquiry.— We have given a reason for the hope that is in us; we have placed before the reader a portion, and only a portion, of the mighty mass of evidence by which our holy religion is established as a revelation from God; we have traced it, step by step, to the day of its birth; we have considered the circumstances under which it took its rise, and made its progress through the world; we have contemplated the stupendous miracles by which the seal was set to its divinity; we have seen the absolute impossibility of imposture; and lastly we have endeavored to show the fallacy of the objections, and the weakness of the difficulties, which captious spirits have sought to throw up in its way. We have now done: we leave the matter in the hands of the reader, with the earnest request that he will pursue the investigation until he has the whole subject before him. And may God lift upon him the light of his countenance, and lead him to the Fountain of ETERNAL TRUTH.

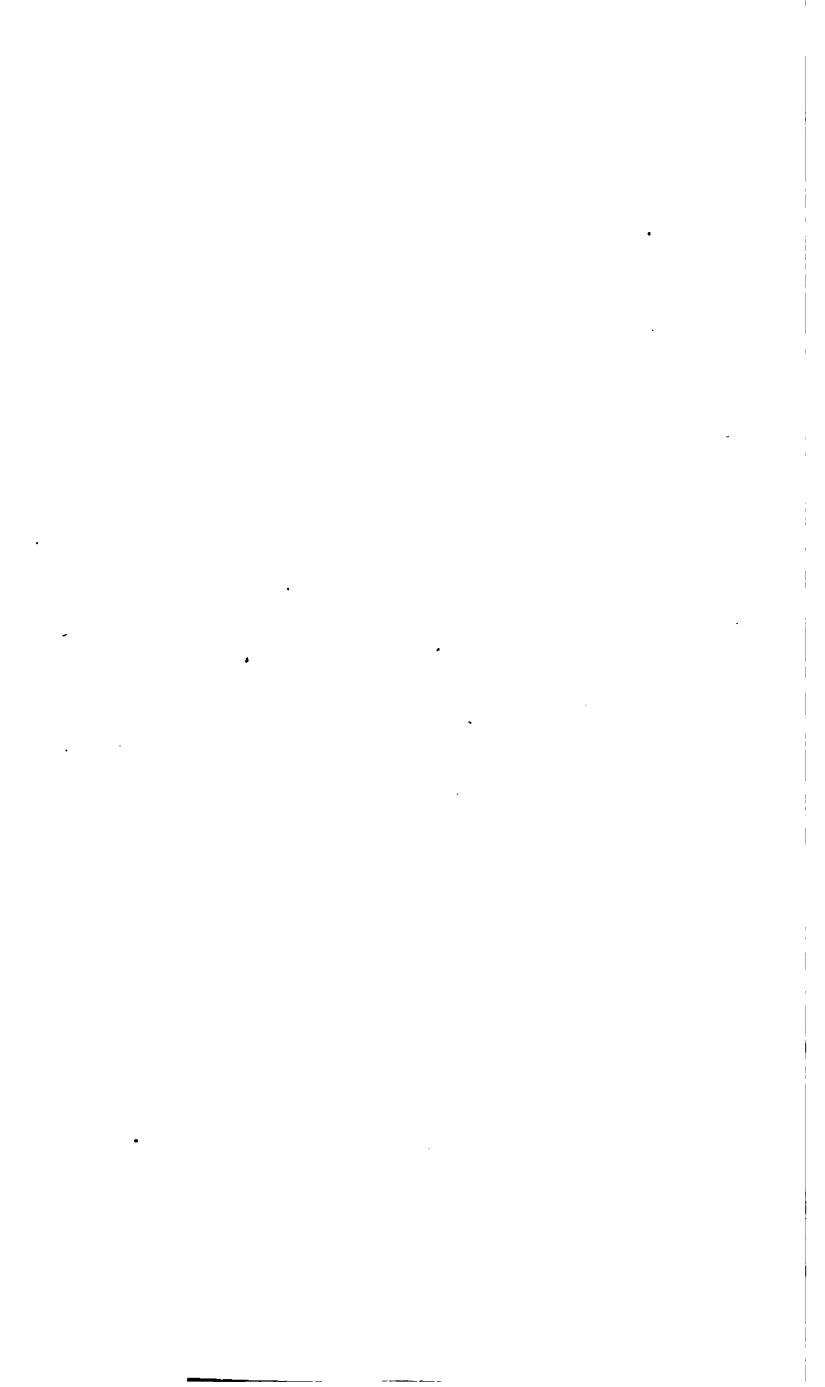




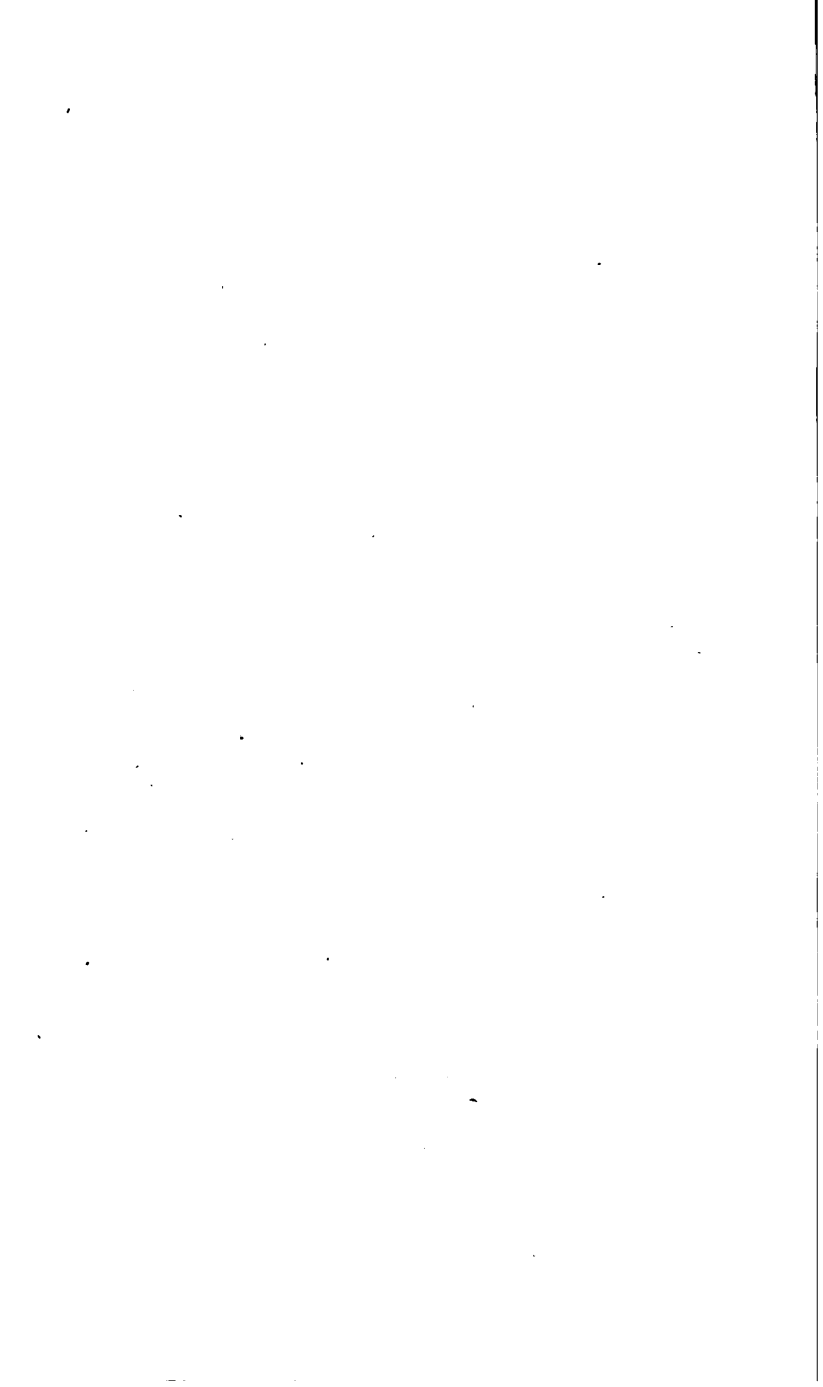


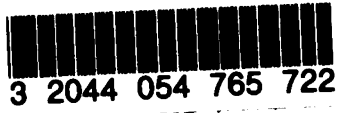












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